

**Gc**  
**942.5802**  
**H488b**

5802  
0  
223

GENEALOGY COLLECTION

✓



3 1833 00668 4895

5  
b  
2





Library of the Institute of American Genealogy  
Chicago

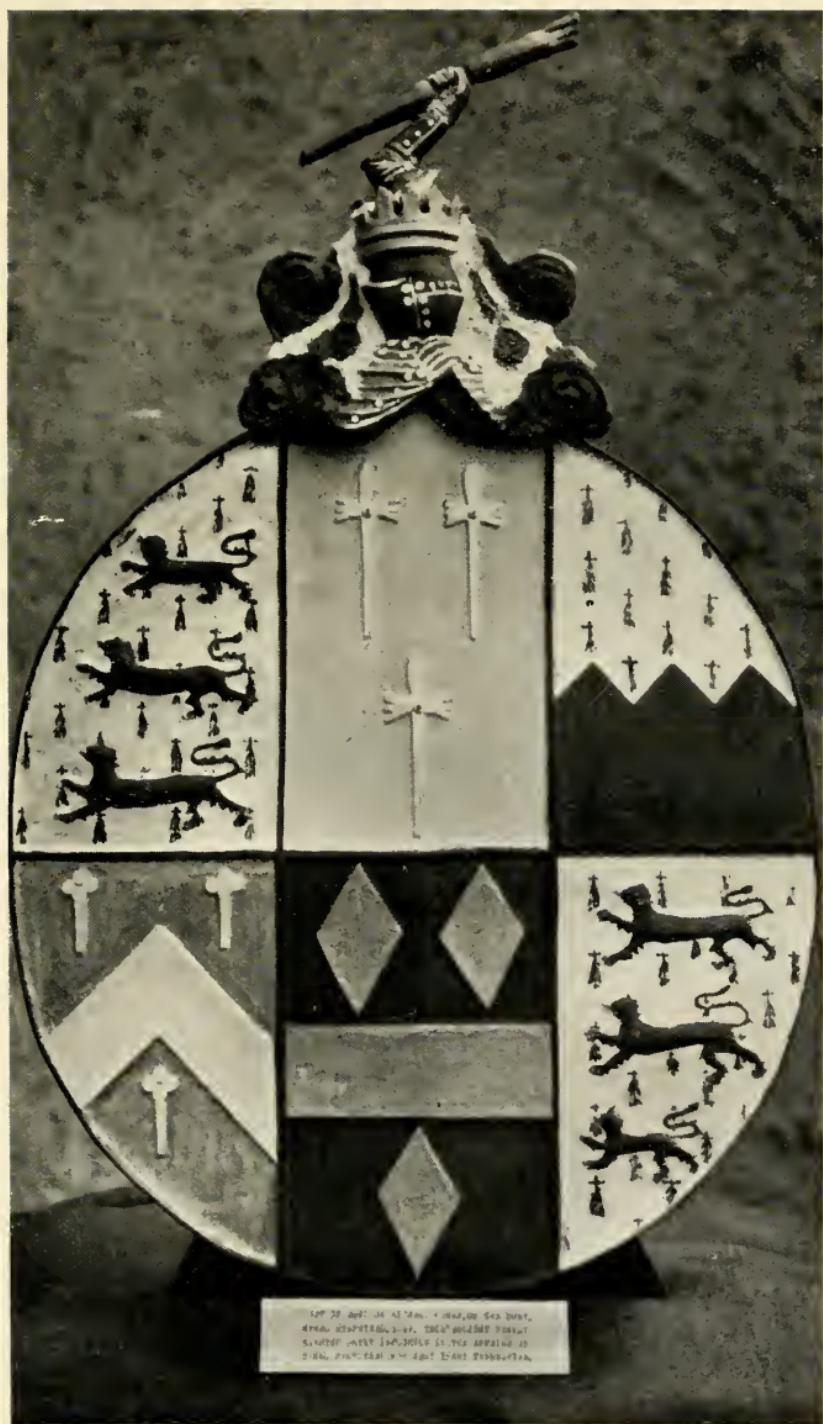
With the author's compliments. 1938.

H. Brewerton  
Small Remnant  
Arts  
England



# HEMEL HEMPSTEAD THROUGH THE AGES





Arms of the Combe Family.

(Frontispiece)





# Hemel Hempstead Through the Ages

Lt.-Col. F. S. BRERETON, C.B.E.

*Sc*  
942.5802  
H488b

Printed and Published by  
HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSPAPERS, LTD.,  
MARLOWES,  
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD.



1356223

**CONTENTS.**

---

Chapter	1.—The Back of Beyond	...	...	...	Page	11
„	2.—Roman Days	...	...	...	„	16
„	3.—William The Norman	...	...	...	„	20
„	4.—The Manor of Hemel Hempstead	...	...	...	„	25
„	5.—The Church of St. Mary	...	...	...	„	32
„	6.—Ancient Customs, Monasteries and Henry VIII.	...	...	...	„	41
„	7.—Early Days in the Bailiwick	...	...	...	„	48
„	8.—Some Bailiffs of Hemel Hempstead	...	...	...	„	54
„	9.—The March of Time	...	...	...	„	59
„	10.—Canal and Railway and Boxmoor Trust	...	...	...	„	66



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

---

Arms of the Combe Family	...	...	...	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Reputed Coffin of King Offa	...	...	...	Facing Page 32
St. Mary's Church—Interior	...	...	...	„ 34
St. Mary's Church—from an Old Print	...	...	...	„ 40
Reputed Trysting Place of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn	...	...	...	„ 44
The Bury House	...	...	...	„ 46
Facsimile of Earliest Fire Engine	...	...	...	„ 50
Ancient Market House and Butchers' Stalls				„ 62

## **ERRATA.**

---

Page 45, First Line of Paragraph 2 should read:—

“Henry VII’s marriage to Elizabeth, daughter of Edward IV, brought”

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT.**

---

In presenting this brief account of Hemel Hempstead and its immediate surroundings I desire to acknowledge my indebtedness to those residents who have been good enough to lend me books and papers dealing with our ancient town, and in particular to H. E. Ellis, Esq., formerly living in Hemel Hempstead, who most generously placed at my disposal a manuscript history of the place prepared when he was in residence here.



# HEMEL HEMPSTEAD THROUGH THE AGES

---

## *Chapter 1.*

### THE BACK OF BEYOND.

There are few small towns of undoubtedly ancient origin in this England of ours which call more insistently for description than does Hemel Hempstead, the Anglo-Saxon vill on the hillside, overlooking the sleepy Gade where it follows its gentle course to Two Waters, there to join the Bulbourne coming from the direction of Tring.

Housing estates are opened, turf which has covered the sloping sides of our surrounding hills for thousands of years is cut in preparation for some new building enterprise, and bungalows and houses arise on every side like mushrooms, till the face of the country is altered, so that old landmarks fade, and few—not even the oldest inhabitants—can say for certain where the old town ended, and where this new addition commenced.

Add to this new building the demolition of ancient houses, slums for the most part, erected, perhaps, in the breezy days of the great King Hal, and we see more landmarks fleeing, swept away by the arm of progress. Some there are who call this wholesale demolition vandalism. But they are not of the number who, because of poverty and low wages, or of a dearth of houses, were compelled to live in insanitary dwellings, damp, dark and rat-infested, with low ceilings, huddled close together and almost devoid of sanitary conveniences. Even these unfortunates clung in some cases to their hovels. But to-day, housed in the new dwellings provided for them, they sing a different tune, a contented tune, for the new régime has brought them to open spaces, to gardens, and up-to-date surroundings.

The core of Hemel Hempstead still nestles beneath the shadow of its wonderful old church, whose tapered spire may be said to mark the very centre of the ancient vill. A church, of Saxon origin, was, perhaps, on that identical spot long before the Conqueror came. There may have been a wattled erection, serving the purpose of public worship, at least two hundred and fifty years before, when the great King Offa, Lord of Mercia, the strongest kingdom of England, visited this outlying corner of his domain, perhaps on his way to the Abbey of St. Alban, then (about 793) being erected.

Those who recall their history will remember the occasion of the founding of this ancient Abbey. Offa, like many a potentate before him and since, was ambitious and, it would seem, unscrupulous. Not content with the kingdom of Mercia, which embraced the greater part of the centre of England, he cast covetous eyes on the kingdom of the East-Angles, of which Ethelbert was king. He invited this king to his court, and it may be that the court was at Berkhamstead, and baited the trap with promise of the hand of his daughter. Ethelbert was foully murdered, and the East-Angles came under the sway of Offa. Matthew Paris, that diligent historian of the Abbey of St. Albans, to whom we owe so much because of his careful account of events in English life, and who, moreover, had at hand in the library of the Abbey records left by his predecessors, excuses the perfidy of the act and seeks to exonerate the great Offa. But his comments were made round about the year 1240, by which time the vastness of the Monastery and Abbey and their magnificence and wealth attested to the worth of the founder, rather than to the opposite.

St. Mary's, Hemel Hempstead, is of pure Norman origin. Some say that it is the most perfect example of Norman workmanship in the whole Kingdom. Yet, how many of us pass it by without so much as a glance at its flint walls, its massive tower and the cross and pinnacle which watch over the town !

There are many reasons for asserting that Hemel Hempstead is a town of outstanding interest. Not only has history been made in its streets and houses, but it stands about one of the roads which leads to the heart of the country. Hertfordshire is, and has been from earliest days, a corridor leading from the south to the busy cities and centres of the midlands and the north. One suspects that

even in far off days invading hosts marched across the county. If not, why Grymms Dyke, a solid bank of gravel which must have cost the labour of many thousands, and which traverses Berkhamstead Common as if to ward off a host. Roads or tracks may have existed long before the Romans came to Britain, for it is said that the Iceni, a horse-breeding race living in what we now call Norfolk and Suffolk, annually drove horses along the Icknield Way, across the edge of Hertfordshire near Luton, and so to Wallingford, where the Thames was crossed on the way down to south-west England.

Comings and goings will have affected the inhabitants of the tiny settlement which we now know as Hemel Hempstead, presuming such a settlement to have then existed. They can hardly have failed to hear the uproar when Julius Caesar crossed the Thames in 54 B.C., and pursued Cassivellaunus to his home town, probably in the neighbourhood of St. Albans. Perhaps some of our former inhabitants ventured south of the Thames with that British chief, hoping to arrest the Roman march.

Then who will assert that, wide eyed and full of wonder, they or rather their great grand-children did not watch the coming of the Emperor Claudius, in A.D. 41, when, having crossed the Thames, it is said by a flimsy bridge at London, but more correctly perhaps, by fording the river at Wallingford, he marched his legions towards Colchester by way of Wheathamstead and St. Albans. There were elephants and camels in his train. Do we resist the sight of elephants and camels parading our high roads in these days when processions, circuses and so forth are a commonplace? Most certainly we do not! In A.D. 41 no such pachyderm had ever set foot on the shores of England. What wonder if British ponies bolted! Claudius may very well have marched to St. Albans via Hemel Hempstead. Are we to suppose that our forebears were so phlegmatic that they took no note of such a happening, of the legions of marching men, their horses and the strange, huge brutes accompanying the army?

Twenty years later Boadicea, queen of the Iceni, swept south through Colchester and Verulamium, as St. Albans was called by the Romans, on her march on London. Eighty thousand Britons are said to have paid with their lives at Barnet for the losses they had caused the Romans, for the invading legions then campaigning in the

north-west were recalled and revenged the massacre of the garrisons they had left behind by wholesale slaughter of Britons.

Four hundred years of peaceful colonisation followed and, no doubt, the early British inhabitants of Hemel Hempstead went about their usual avocations, for Roman rule was just. Roman and Briton lived side by side, villas were erected along the Bulbourne, where Boxmoor Station now stands, mills were built along the course of the Gade and the Colne, for the civilising invader had taught the art of growing and milling corn, and plenty brought happiness to everyone. But in the east, along that coast from south to north, a new invader was appearing. The Romans placed special legions to guard the "Saxon Shore," till presently, when Rome recalled her legions because of troubles nearer home, the Saxon avalanche fell upon the south-east coast of Britain, while murderous Picts and Scots swarmed south across Hadrian's wall and forts stretching between Newcastle and Carlisle, and reached London.

Could the little settlement beside the Gade escape that catastrophe?

It is hardly possible. Britons who still lived were driven to the west, to Cornwall and Wales, which they held for themselves throughout the Anglo-Saxon-Danish invasion. A very few may, perhaps, have saved their lives at the price of slavery. But one may venture the statement that no Britons now remained in mid and east England, and that the villas and wattle huts beside the Gade, the primitive church which may even then have existed, and the barn-like structure already erected at St. Albans to commemorate the death of the protomartyr St. Alban and the acceptance of Christianity by the Romans, were given to the flames, so that nothing British and nothing Christian remained.

The years swept on to the days of Alfred the Great, when the conflicting Saxon kingdoms of the new England acknowledged the sovereignty of this one King. Danes were now the common enemy. They sailed up the Colne and the Lee. They raided near Watford and Rickmansworth, and were entrenched close to Ware. These freebooters may have tramped through Hemel Hempstead. The vill had that name now, whatever it may have had in times of old. It was of Saxon origin, for those sea wolves had destroyed the former habitations. And it was Christianised, so that, once more,

assuming the Pagan Danes to have driven the Saxons out, the wattle church at Hemel Hempstead will have flamed into ashes.

The march of time brings Harold, the battle of Hastings and the progress of the Conqueror along the south bank of the Thames to Wallingford, and so to Berkhamstead and St. Albans. Are we to suppose that the Saxon inhabitants—the English inhabitants—of Hemel Hempstead were unmoved by this invasion? Is it likely that they stayed in their homes or remained at work in their fields and mills while the fortunes of the country, their own, too, were in the balance? It is much more likely that some of the woodmen were rushed to the track where the doughty Abbot Frederick, of St. Albans, the 13th Abbot to rule Abbey and Monastery, caused trees to be felled, thus barring the march of the Norman army, hoping for a delay which would enable the nobles of England to gather, with what remained of the army.

One can almost see the Conqueror's knights, armed and spurred, with pennons blowing in the wind, reining in at the obstruction and casting eyes all round them to discover an ambush. Did the invaders come through this ancient hamlet? It was, perhaps, the easiest route, for the road by way of Nettleden is extremely hilly. They may have marched along Akeman Street and forded the Bulbourne. In any case, legend says that their progress was halted, and close to Hemel Hempstead, so that one need use little imagination to agree that this town lived through more days of excitement.

Kings have come and gone. There has been at least one royal romance at Hemel Hempstead. Time was when Abbots, mounted on mule back, and monks jostled their way with field labourers, fleshers, bakers and all sorts in the busy street of our town. Since the Norman Conquest it has witnessed a thousand and more events, some of which are set down in the records of its church or its council chamber. These and rules appertaining to its fairs, its charities and its charters are worth examination. Notes referring to old inhabitants, to ancient houses, to queer, old-time customs are worth reporting. Hemel Hempstead—that is, the antique portion of it—may be in danger of effacement by reason of the inordinate spate of modern-day building. But nothing can rob it of its history, and that, without shadow of doubt, is of surpassing interest.

*Chapter 2.*  
ROMAN DAYS.

No records are in existence to tell us whether men lived at the dawn of British history where ancient Hemel Hempstead now stands. It is generally agreed, however, that Julius Caesar, during his second invasion of Albion, marched as far north as the neighbourhood of present-day St. Albans, where he received the surrender of Cassivellaunus and his woad-painted Britons, and took hostages from amongst them. From this it would appear that the neighbourhood was populated to some extent, and it may be that Hemel Hempstead, a mere group of wattled huts, existed in those far off times.

Claudius Caesar, marching with elephants and camels, may have found a settlement in the same spot, when he arrived on the scene a hundred years later. But he has left no record of the fact, though we may fairly surmise that, hidden amidst the forest lands which then clad practically the whole of north-west and north-eastern England, and indeed, the greater part of Albion itself, were a succession of hamlets, such as Berkhamstead and Hemel Hempstead.

We may liken the Romans in their colonizing methods to ourselves. For the almost endless possessions which make up the present-day British Empire are held not by the sword, but by pacific means. Unruly elements have, naturally enough, to be subdued in the first place, and Roman cohorts marching throughout the land saw to it that British resistance ceased. Their camps were placed in strategic positions, and their garrisons were at hand to suppress uprisings. They crushed the power of the Druids, decimated the ill-bred armies of Boadicea, and brought peace to the land. Then began a period of comparative prosperity. The natives, assured of fair play and of just laws, settled down to cultivate the land or to trade. For some four hundred years these peaceful conditions reigned, disturbed occasionally by incursions of Viking freebooters along the eastern coast, where the Count of the Saxons' shore dealt with them, or by raids and forays across the

northern border, where Hadrian's wall stretched its long ramparts of stone, with its numerous forts, successfully holding off the wild men of the north.

One other noteworthy incident occurred. Christianity came to Britain. The Martyr St. Alban was beheaded on the slope of the hill so close to Hemel Hempstead, and there, after a chaotic interlude of almost three hundred years, the first stones of the great Abbey were laid in his memory.

The Roman colonisers saw the attractions of this part of Hertfordshire. The crystal clear streams rising in the Chilterns and flowing down the gentle valleys thickly clad with trees drew a number of them from the crowded streets of Verulamium. To the north-west lay the broken chain of hills which add so much to the beauties of our surroundings. Their farther slopes descend steeply to the Vale of Aylesbury. But their south-eastern slopes fall gently, while the valleys of the Ver, the Gade, the Bulbourne, the Chess and the Misbourne provide gateways to the country beyond, gateways which to-day serve as useful a purpose as they did in the time of the Romans.

Though we have no written records of those Roman colonising days, we may safely infer that they were peaceful, for in these valleys, relatively far from the strong arm of the garrison at Verulamium, there arose villas, almost precisely similar to those ruined villas one sees to-day in Pompeii, with tesselated pavements, and equipped with hypocausts and furnaces to ward off the cold and damp of the climate. Perhaps there were villas alongside the trickling waters of the Gade. There are, at least, Roman bricks in the fabric of Great Gaddesden Church. Anyone who cares to visit the lovely Norman Church of St. Mary, Hemel Hempstead, will find similar indications. We know quite definitely that there were villas at Boxmoor, for they have been excavated, or rather, their ruins have been uncovered, and two at least existed, one now covered by the Stationmaster's house, and the second in Box Lane, while the burial ground of Box Lane Chapel was once the site of Roman burials. Further, the foundations of Roman villas have been uncovered at Abbots Langley and at Latimer.

To what extent the Romans and their British subjects cleared the country of trees we have no knowledge. Forest and brushwood

extended without doubt in all directions, though the summits of the surrounding hills were in part bare, save for springy turf, for prevailing winds did not encourage tree growth.

Roads and camps were essential to Roman occupation, and whatever the nature of the country, and however steep and severe the conditions, these pioneers pushed their roads in all directions, gave them foundations, drained them and put rest houses or camps along the way. Ermine Street struck northward from London to Bishops Stortford and beyond. Watling Street left London for Verulamium, and penetrating what is now Gorhambury, reached Markyate and Dunstable, and stretched on to the north-west. There was the ancient Icknield Way in existence, perhaps merely as a track through the forest, but a road for all that, long before Caesar set foot in Albion. It left Norfolk and the north-east, hit Baldock, skirted the western edge of Hertfordshire, and reaching Wallingford forded the Thames and went on to the country in the south-west, where the Iceni were in the habit of bartering their animals.

Akeman Street deserves separate mention. It began its course at Bath, the Aquae Solis of the Romans, reached Aylesbury, Tring and Berkhamsted, went on to Verulamium, and so across forest country to the Roman stronghold at Colchester. To-day the London Road, skirting Boxmoor Common with its array of chestnuts, has replaced a section of the ancient Akeman Street. But railway and canal have contrived to sever the old road. It followed Berkhamstead's High Street. It probably swung to the left, or north, just where the present road swings to the right at the immediate exit of the town. There it forded the stream and held the left bank till, passing by way of Chaulden Lane, it probably continued along St. John's Road till it reached the River Gade, and fording it, curved to climb the ascent, via Crab Tree Lane, to Tile Kiln Farm and so to Leverstock Green and St. Albans.

One other Roman Road probably existed. It is known these days as High Street Green.

The withdrawal of Roman legions somewhere about the year 410, left Albion populated by a peaceful farming and trading people whose protection had for centuries been the strong right arm of the legions. They were helpless against robbers and aggres-

sors, and of these there were plenty. Picts and Scots swarmed across Hadrian's undefended wall and invaded the south. Viking ships entered the Humber, the Wash, the Ouse, numbers of rivers along the east and the southern coasts. There is no record of these times. Oblivion covers the happenings that drove the British from their settlements, saw hamlets given to the flames, and the trees and brushwood descend into the valleys till villas, now ruined, and roads, now unused, were covered with growth or weed and lost to sight and memory. There was chaos at Hemel Hempstead and elsewhere, till toward the seventh century, when Saxon invaders began to settle in numbers, and the ancient vill beside the Gade, if indeed it ever existed, was resettled and given the name of Hemel Hempstead, the stead or hamlet on the hill, as distinct from Berk-hampstead, the stead amongst the hills.

### *Chapter 3.*

#### WILLIAM THE NORMAN.

Domesday Book provides the first authentic mention we have of Hemel Hempstead. The term "authentic" is employed with due respect to all that the word implies. For this famous book, which contains in two volumes a minute survey of almost every corner of the realm conquered by William 1st, was compiled almost certainly between the years 1083 and 1086, that is to say, within twenty years of the Conquest. The Conqueror was a good business man, and a great organiser, and as the security of himself and his new realm against uprisings of the Saxon and Danish inhabitants depended upon Norman nobles and knights and their dependents it was essential that he should know with accuracy the number of manors in each county, the people working upon them, and every particular as to plough lands, forest and waste, mills and so forth, for he had given the conquered lands with lavish hand to his chief supporters, the one condition being that each must provide men and arms and horses for the defence of the kingdom. Each noble in his turn made grants to subsidiary nobles and knights, all subject to the same conditions, while these lesser folk farmed out their holdings to lesser lights still, upon precisely similar terms.

These two Domesday Books—*Liber de Wintonia*, as they were known—were compiled by commissioners, who were sent to all parts, with the exception of the northern counties, where the sword of succeeding conquerors had wasted the lands and left them practically untenanted. They came into Hertfordshire, one of the many counties into which Alfred the Great had divided his Saxon kingdom, and dealt with the county hundred by hundred, that being the method of division adopted by Alfred; the hundreds being again split into tenths or tithings.

In the neighbourhood of Hemel Hempstead they found a complication. The great Offa, king of Mercia, had given six manors as long ago as 793 to the Abbot of St. Albans, and part of these lands abutted upon the manor of Hemel Hempstead. Domesday there-

fore deals with two places of practically similar name, though the spelling is rather different, and they lay in different hundreds.

In Albaneston, or Cashio hundred the Abbot held Henammestede, a manor in the demesne of the Church of St. Alban, of the then annual value of £25.

Hamelamestede, in the hundred of Treung, or Tring, now in Dacorum Hundred, was held by Earl Moritan or Moretain, the Conqueror's half brother, together with vast estates elsewhere. Hemel Hempstead was, in fact, not an isolated manor. It formed part of the honour of Berkhamstead, which in those far-off days was Hemel's relatively big and important brother.

Here is Domesday's description of the ancient vill :—

" It was rated at ten hides. Arable is thirty caracutes. In demesne are three hides, and there are four caracutes there, and two more may be made. There are two frenchmen with thirteen bordars having twenty caracutes, and four more may be made. There are eight bondmen and four mills worth thirty-seven shillings and four pence, and three hundred eels less twenty five. Meadow four caracutes. Pasture for cattle and two shillings. Pannage for twelve hundred hogs. The total value is twenty-two pounds. When received twenty-five pounds; and as much in the time of King Edward. Two brothers, who were men of Earl Lewin, held the manor."

Houses are not mentioned, it will be observed, though the enormously-valuable mills are. But the name indicates that here was at least a village. If we translate Hemel as " high," Ham or Hem stands for a town, and a collection of wattle huts may have earned such a designation. Sted is a station. The name therefore, implies a settlement of some sort, with its frenchmen—Norman settlers one supposes—its bordars and its bondmen, all under the rule of some lordling who had usurped the position of the two brothers, men of the Saxon Earl Lewin, and who was bound to Earl Mortain, half-brother of the Conqueror, to give service and knights fees for the land he held.

Short though the description is it permits one to realise the existence in those far off days of a small community, self-contained in every respect, farming the Saxon Manor, reaping the corn which the Saxon invader had discovered to grow abundantly in the clay

and flint soil covering the underlying chalk of the hills, and grinding it in the mills worked by the power of the rivers Gade and Bulbourne. The bondmen, or villeins were the Saxon churls of other times. Each farmed some thirty acres, laid out in strips of half an acre or so, each strip a furlong in length, and separated by a "baulk" or turf wall from its neighbour, while there was a "headland" at the end of every one where the plough was turned. Adjacent to groups of strips was common pannage or pasture, on which cattle belonging to the community were turned for grazing.

In payment the villein gave a certain amount of free service on the farm of his lord, and provided a pair of oxen for the plough. Though he held no right to his land, it usually passed from father to son, and, after many years the villein became a free man, paying rent in kind and in money.

The Bordar was an inferior churl, occupying a boarded hovel, and farming five acres only, which supported poultry, so that the lord's table could be supplied, while there was yet again an inferior class of labourer, the cotter, a serf pure and simple. As the years went by following William's conquest these various classes were frequently "manumitted" or freed, and in the case of the manor of Hemel Hempstead, Copyholders—that is, men holding a perpetual lease of their farming lands—presently took the place of the freedmen, could will their lands to whom they wished, and could occupy them free of interference so long as they paid their fees, rendered fines to the Lord of the Manor when a new occupant took possession, and generally obeyed the rules and laws obtaining in that particular manor.

Domesday gives us a picture of a completely tranquil, if not prosperous Hemel Hempstead. There is a Norman Lordling in control of the Manor, there are Norman settlers and Saxon farmers and farm hands. Mills are presumably at work. The fisheries are being exploited. There is plough land, grazing land and woods which support more than a thousand pigs.

The actual acreage is uncertain, for the dimensions of a "hide" of land are presumed to have varied. By some authorities a hide has been calculated at a hundred acres. By others as rather less. The truth appears to be that a "hide" was that stretch of land which one plough could plough in the course of a year, and, of

course, heavy soil would reduce the acreage.

The question of "swine" needs comment, for Domesday records have very many reckonings of the number of those beasts which various manors were calculated to be able to support. Pork formed the staple flesh diet of those days and, pigs were herded in the oak and beech forests, where they foraged for themselves, and lived a wild life compared with that of their relatively pampered existence of to-day. That more than a thousand swine were supported by the manor woods of Hemel Hempstead indicates that there was then a considerable area of forest country.

The picture compares with that of England, so far as we know it, in the first days of the Roman invasion. Just as soon as opposition was overcome, and that happened, with isolated exceptions, very swiftly, Conqueror and conquered settled down peacefully side by side, and the natives carried on their customary avocations. The Saxon invasion was, we know, a different matter. Those unfortunate British who had survived the coming of the wild men of the North fled before the Teutonic invasion, or were slaughtered, so that the settlement at Hemel Hempstead may be inferred to have been essentially Saxon.

Now the wheel of fortune had swung about once more. Harold's strength had been weakened at Stamford Bridge when he defeated the Danes at the moment of the landing of William the First. He had made a forced march towards Hastings, and there he and the flower of his army had fallen. Opposition to the Conqueror was thereafter negligible, save in scattered parts. Saxon nobles, Danish as well, swore fealty to him at Berkhamstead, perhaps in the grounds of the castle, which it is presumed existed. William swore to respect their rights, and as promptly broke his pledged word, for, with few exceptions Saxon chiefs were ousted from their lands, and the manors of England were parcelled out amongst the Norman nobles.

Whatever may have been the hardships of such action—and there must have been great suffering—this division and the disappearance of all opposition and the general peace which followed permitted communities all over the country to function just as aforetime. A new lordling appeared. A few Norman settlers took up lands. Old customs were respected, and the religion of

Saxon, Dane and Norman of those days was precisely similar. There was every reason therefore, why Hemel Hempstead and a hundred and more other communities should be at peace and seek only prosperity. The manor of Saxon days continued as the Manor under the Conqueror.

### *Chapter 4.*

#### THE MANOR OF HEMEL HEMPSTEAD.

The term "Manor" has not to-day the significance it had in Saxon and Norman times, for many changes have, quite naturally, come about. In those far off days each vill was sufficient unto itself; and the collection of vills which were included in any one manor looked to one lord for protection, laws, customs and so forth. There was an excellent example adjacent to Hemel Hempstead to give point to this statement, and reason for changes which in the course of time made the parish of far greater importance than was the manor. The Abbot of St. Albans gathered a great number of people, priests and laymen under his wing. He administered ecclesiastical and civil laws. He fed the aged and the poor and tended the sick spread throughout his many manors.

The Dissolution of the monasteries and priories and nunneries of England in Henry 8th's time left sick and poor almost stranded. Thereupon Queen Elizabeth promulgated laws designed to replace the humanitarian offices formerly carried on by the religious houses. In 1601 she instituted a Poor Law, and relied on parishes to assist in the assessment of the people. The parish then, and not the manor, became the important unit in the country, and at Hemel Hempstead we find that its boundaries marched almost exactly with those of the manor.

This general and necessarily brief statement does not overlook the fact that some form of organised relief of the sick and poor had existed from very early times. It had been the custom and the responsibility of communities to give in kind or in money for the support of their more unfortunate brethren, and the earliest community was probably the Saxon hundred. In later days the clergy in particular were exhorted to obtain alms from their flock, and to distribute the proceeds, while selected members of the poor were authorised to collect broken meats to be shared out amongst the hungry. Meantime, it should be borne in mind that while the Manor was the area administered by the Lord of the Manor, and subject

to the Manorial Court and the Court Leet, the church regarded the area wherein it administered to the spiritual needs of its own particular flock as the parish, and in those days of relatively un-organised relief of the poor it drew from the wealthier members of its various parishes what alms it could for charitable purposes. Monasteries, Priories and nunneries no doubt supplemented this relief to some considerable extent, while it is probable that only in the infirmaries of the religious houses could skilled attention be obtained for the sick.

The parish then, was a convenient method for organised relief, and Queen Elizabeth adopted it as the readiest basis for taxation. In the case of Hemel Hempstead we know already that parish boundaries marched almost exactly with those of the Manor. Very briefly stated, the Elizabethan statute directed and empowered parish officers to provide a stock of material for "setting the poor to work," and also to employ monies for the relief of the lame, impotent, old, blind and others unable to work, provided always that they were poor and had no relatives able to support them. Further provision in this and other acts was made to deal with vagrants, then as now a matter of concern to the authorities. They dealt somewhat harshly with able-bodied beggars and vagrants in earlier days. Here is an extract from one of the regulations. Persons convicted of "begging, wandering and misordering themselves—shall be adjudged to be grievously whipped, and burnt through the gristle of the right ear with a hot iron of the compass of one inch."

Times have indeed changed! The sick, the poor, the needy are to-day cared for in the most generous and humane manner, while the wilful vagrant is in relative clover.

It is worth suggesting how ancient Hemel Hempstead Manor came into existence. We may reasonably imagine a Saxon clan crossing the sea and nosing their boat into some river mouth. Perhaps our forefathers sailed up the Thames, they, their servants, wives and children, a few horses and perhaps cattle. It may be that they ascended the River Lea to Hertford. Then, pushing forward through a forest country, perhaps entirely uninhabited, though there may have been signs of ancient Roman roads or of old-time settlements beneath the dense growth, they came upon

the fair valley of the Gade, with its clear stream, its surrounding woods, and the adjacent valleys giving easy access to other parts. They pitched camp and erected a stockade on the brow of the rise where the Church of St. Mary now stands, and presently their vill grew. The lord of the clan selected a sheltered corner for his Bury house, the centre of the manor he proposed to carve from the forest lands. A timbered dwelling arose, with wattles daubed with clay between the beams. Then a deep moat was dug to protect it. Foresters cleared the Gadebridge meadows. Wattled huts began to cluster to the east of what is now the High Street. Great barns were built south of the present vicarage, and as the clan thrrove, and others, perhaps, came across the sea to join it, the work of clearing went on apace, not always round the Bury house, but farther afield, at Westbrookhay, at Bovingdon, at Flaunden, Haybarns and other places, where minor lordlings set up their Burys and thereby created the nucleus of subsidiary manors, all included in the manor of Hemel Hempstead.

That manor extended in Saxon times, or at some later date, to 12,440 acres, reduced in 1841 by severance of Flaunden and Bovingdon parishes to 7,184 acres. It was some three miles in width from east to west, measured from Apsley Mead to Bourne End Bridge, while its length ran across the line of the valleys from Holtsmore End Green in the north east to the valley of the Chess, beyond Flaunden in the south, a distance of some nine miles.

The nodal point of all this forest, pasture and arable land, with its burys, sub-manors and communities, was the Bury or Manor House of Hemel Hempstead, within a stone's throw of the Bury of this day. Bury Road then led to the Lordling's water mill. His fishery was in the River Gade. His villeins and boarders and cottars lived along the growing High Street. His barns lay between, and, at some date following the reintroduction of Christianity, the descendant of a former pagan may have erected a church and vicarage, urged thereto by his powerful neighbour, the Abbot of St. Albans.

Later, in Norman times perhaps, a court house was set up, and slowly the place expanded, very slowly, for not for a great number of years did the population of the Manor exceed one thousand. Norman days provided other owners of the Manor. Earl Mortain was succeeded by a son. In the 13th century, when Edward III

was king of this realm, Edmund de Cornwall was the lord. It was an important event for Hemel Hempstead, for in 1285 this noble gave the manor into the keeping of the Rector and brethren of the Monastery of Ashridge, the Bons hommes, as they were termed, and at the same time manumitted—that is, freed—all the villeins. Thenceforth the Rector of Ashridge exercised a by no means feeble influence throughout the manor.

Throughout this slow development of Hemel Hempstead we need to bear in mind the contiguity of Berkhamstead, then of far more importance than was Hemel. Kings and Queens of the Realm came to the castle, and sometimes resided there. The painted chamber, now only a ruin under the shadow of the Keep, witnessed Royal Courts, with throngs of gallants, soldiers and ladies assembled. Edmer Atule, a great Saxon lord had held the manor before the coming of the Normans, and may have been within the moat when William the Conqueror, baulked on his march to St. Albans by the courageous Abbot Frederick, returned to the castle, such as it then was, and there received the submission of the Saxon and his brother nobles. Robert, Count of Mortain, the Conqueror's half brother, as we know, succeeded to the manor, and to the county of Cornwall. Indeed, he was granted a total of 793 manors. His son William succeeded, and was dispossessed for rebellion. Randolph, King Henry 1st's Chancellor, was next in possession, but died following an accident, so that the crown once more held these extensive lands. Great names appear in the years that follow, as owners or as mere farmers of the manors, St. Thomas A'Becket amongst them. Queen Isabella, second wife to King John, set up house in the castle, and Richard, his second son, earl of Cornwall, died there in 1272. His son Edmund, succeeded to castle and honour, and he it was who gave the Bonhommes at Ashridge the manor of Hemel Hempstead.

Many years later, in 1336, that great personage in English life and history, Edward the Black Prince, Duke of Cornwall, became the owner of the Manor of Berkhamstead. During his sojourn at the castle he is said to have paid many visits to the monastery at Ashridge. Following him came many more royal owners, Katherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour amongst them.

Enough has been written to shew the relative importance of

Berkhampstead and Hemel Hempstead. We may recollect, too, that the royal park at King's Langley often had noble residents, while the glory and power of the great Abbot of St. Albans pervaded everything. The importance of Kings Langley should not be overlooked. The royal residence was at first merely a rest house, for Kings Langley—Chiltern Langley as it was then called—was an easy day's travel from London when the court was en route to Berkhamstead. That was as early as 1104. Later it developed into a palace, with a park of 667 acres in which royalty hunted, the boundaries touching those of the manor of Hemel Hempstead. Edward 1st stayed at the palace for four months in 1294. In June 1344 Phillipa, Edward III's queen, gave birth to Edmund of Langley in the palace, and a few days later Michael de Mentmore, Abbot of St. Albans, came riding over to baptize the royal infant. Richard II spent two Christmases there, and is the last royal personage to be mentioned in connection with the palace. That was in 1396, and thereafter this royal hunting-box appears to have been deserted and to have fallen into ruin.

Close beside the Palace was the Dominican Priory of the Brotherhood of Friars Preachers, founded in 1308 by Edward II, who gave the Friars an annual grant of seventy marks. These Friars waxed rich as the years passed. They were given the manor house. They secured rights to cut timber in Chipperville wood, and, finally, Edward IV, a very generous benefactor to these Dominicans, gave them right of toll upon all the corn ground at the near-by mill on the Gade. At the Dissolution Kings Langley Priory was the wealthiest of all the Priories in England.

Just across the valley—the long lea or long meadow—lay the outposts of the Abbot of St. Albans, with his Church dominating the scene, and its farmsteads, rented from the Abbot. In one of those farms Adrian IV, the only English Pope, was born. He was Nicholas Breakespear, and it is said of him that, desiring a monastic life, he presented himself at St. Albans and was rejected because of his ignorance. He became Pope in 1154, and Matthew Paris tells us that he died by the hand of a poisoner.

Such were the surroundings of Hemel Hempstead during the years following the Conquest. Forest and brush was being cleared to give more room for tillage, and for the growing of corn. Smaller,

subsidiary manors were being carved out, while the bounds of the manor were being marked as accurately as the times allowed, so as to avoid disputes with neighbours. Accurate maps and instruments permit us these days to delineate parish boundaries with exactness. But in the early days they were not in existence, and the owners and tenants of manors had need to "beat the bounds," and set up crosses of stone to mark certain limits. There was one, known as Revilig's Cross at the point where the Redbourn Road left the manor of Hemel Hempstead, and doubtless, many a wayside cross was used for the same purpose. How necessary this "beating the bounds" was may be evidenced by the condition of affairs in 1380. The "Black Death" had visited Hemel Hempstead. The pestilence had cut like a sword through the hamlets, so that many of the oldest farming folk were dead, and with them exact knowledge as to the manor boundaries. The lord of the manor assembled a jury of tenants and perambulated the boundaries, taking evidence from reliable witnesses. No doubt the record was passed to adjacent owners so that there might be no disputes.

To-day we beat parish boundaries. It is an old custom with more of fun than of importance attached to it. The last record of such an event carried out at the behest of the then Churchwardens of Hemel Hempstead, took place in 1744. At least, there is no record of such an event after that date.

The picture sketched of Hemel Hempstead in far off days is one of a tranquil, beautiful countryside. Of the home farm nestling around the moated bury of the lord of the manor. Of the Norman Church arising or already built farther up the brow of the hill. Of the vicarage house, the cottars' dwellings, the mill and the fishery house. Of pasture and arable, scattered cottages, and lanes winding where the High Street is now, or where Bury Road ends. Other lanes led along the manor boundaries, or to open pastures at Boxmoor, and thence up the valley by Box Lane to Bovingdon and Flaunden. They climbed Boxted, the rise to the west of the Bury House, or High Street side to the ridge above, where ran High Street Green road, distinct from the town's High Street, and possibly a relic of Roman occupation.

The manor was a complete unit, Burys, mills, cottages, woods, waste, pannage and arable. Its Burys comprised the aforemention-

ed central Bury, and the following subsidiaries : Agnells, over-hanging Hemel Hempstead, adjacent to High Street Green ; Eastbrookhay to the east, and Westbrookhay in Bovingdon, once held by the family of De la Hay. Peniston, or Mareschall as it was formerly known, in Bovingdon, and marching with Westbrookhay, Beavers, where the Manor Estate now lies. Haybarns, or Heathbarns, precisely where stands Heath Park Hotel to-day, together with adjacent lands, and in addition Woodhall sub-manor with the Priory of St. Giles-in-the-wood seems to have been included. The latter was a Nunnery where dwelt a Prioress and thirteen nuns, whose first cell had been at Sopwell, under the shadow of the great Abbey of St. Albans. Two nuns had built themselves a cell close to a stream, in which they were wont to soften their bread, presumably their frugal diet. The cell developed into the Priory of St. Giles-in-the-wood, where the mansion known as Beechwood now stands. Henry VIII suppressed the Priory and sold it and its lands to Dr. Page, one of the court attendants. As in the case of many another favourite, Dr. Page sold the property within a year.

## *Chapter 5.*

### THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY.

Fewer than a hundred years had passed since that epoch-making submission of the Saxon nobles to William the Conqueror at Berkhamsted when architects, masons and labourers were busily at work erecting the noble Church of St. Mary, Hemel Hempstead, which we pass as we go our several ways. To be precise, the work started in 1150, and the result, as we see it to-day, is an almost perfect example of late Norman work, in flint and Totternhoe stone, with which are mingled many bricks of Roman origin. The building was completed in forty years, except, perhaps, for the wonderful, tapered spire with its covering of lead, which was added in the 13th century.

The question of ecclesiastical life in England needs brief consideration at this point, for Christianity has come and gone, and returned again to this island kingdom. Ancient Britons are said to have followed the faith of the Druids. Roman worshippers of many gods followed. Then came Amphibalus and St. Alban himself, said to have been of Roman origin, bringing with him a message of Christianity. Picts and Scots and Saxon and Danish pagans stamped out the new religion, burned and sacked the monasteries and slaughtered the priests. Then "The Word" reached the North of England, coming from Ireland by way of Scotland. Monks who had settled on Iona, with Aidan at their head, began a missionary campaign in Northumbria in 635. Cuthbert, of Lindisfarne, continued the work, and Benedict Biscop completed it by erecting the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow, about 680.

From these centres of religion and culture went forth other missionaries, and the Venerable Bede, a monk of Jarrow, has recorded their works, for he was there about this time and died in 735.

We know that the ruthless Offa, king of Mercia and lord of Hemel Hempstead amongst many other manors, was converted and gave lavishly to St. Albans. It may be that he gave lands and labour to erect a Church at Hemel Hempstead. It is even



*Reputed Coffin of King Offa.*



suggested that he was buried in the Churchyard of St. Mary, and as if to assist the suggestion, a stone coffin was disinterred many years ago, which may be of Saxon origin. The word " OSSA " is carved on it. The S might be taken for F. But the idea is a little fantastic.

Offa lived in the eighth century. The Abbey and Monastery at St. Albans was a flourishing place when the Conqueror arrived. But there is no mention of the Bonshommes at Ashridge before the Manor of Hemel Hempstead was given to them, and in fact the Monastery was founded on April 17th, 1277.

Monasteries existed at that date throughout England, and the Conquest was the signal for a spate of building of cathedrals and churches which almost vied with present day building activities, having regard to the far smaller population. Perhaps the lord of the manor conceived it his duty to replace an existing church. He had ready at hand at Totternhoe quarry, in Ashridge, all the stone he wanted, and Norman architects were past masters of their craft. Whatever the cause, and whoever sponsored the building, the graceful Church of St. Mary arose beside the Gade, just a little north of the moated Bury House of the manor farm, a mere stone's throw from the site first settled by the Saxons.

In St. Mary's Church, or in its Churchyard, are gathered the ashes of many of the great and smaller inhabitants of Hemel Hempstead through the ages. Perhaps the strangest memorial of all is that of Thomas Deacon, of Corner Hall, " student in physick," who would appear to have been consumptive, for the stone which originally covered his attenuated body and bore an inscription before it was broken in two and the halves divided, was six feet in length and only two in width. It disclosed that the said Thomas Deacon, whose " extraordinary spare body in respect of breadth—and of height, being in proportion to the length of this stone, might shew the desire he had to Heaven, and so departed Sept. 28th, An. Do. 16--."

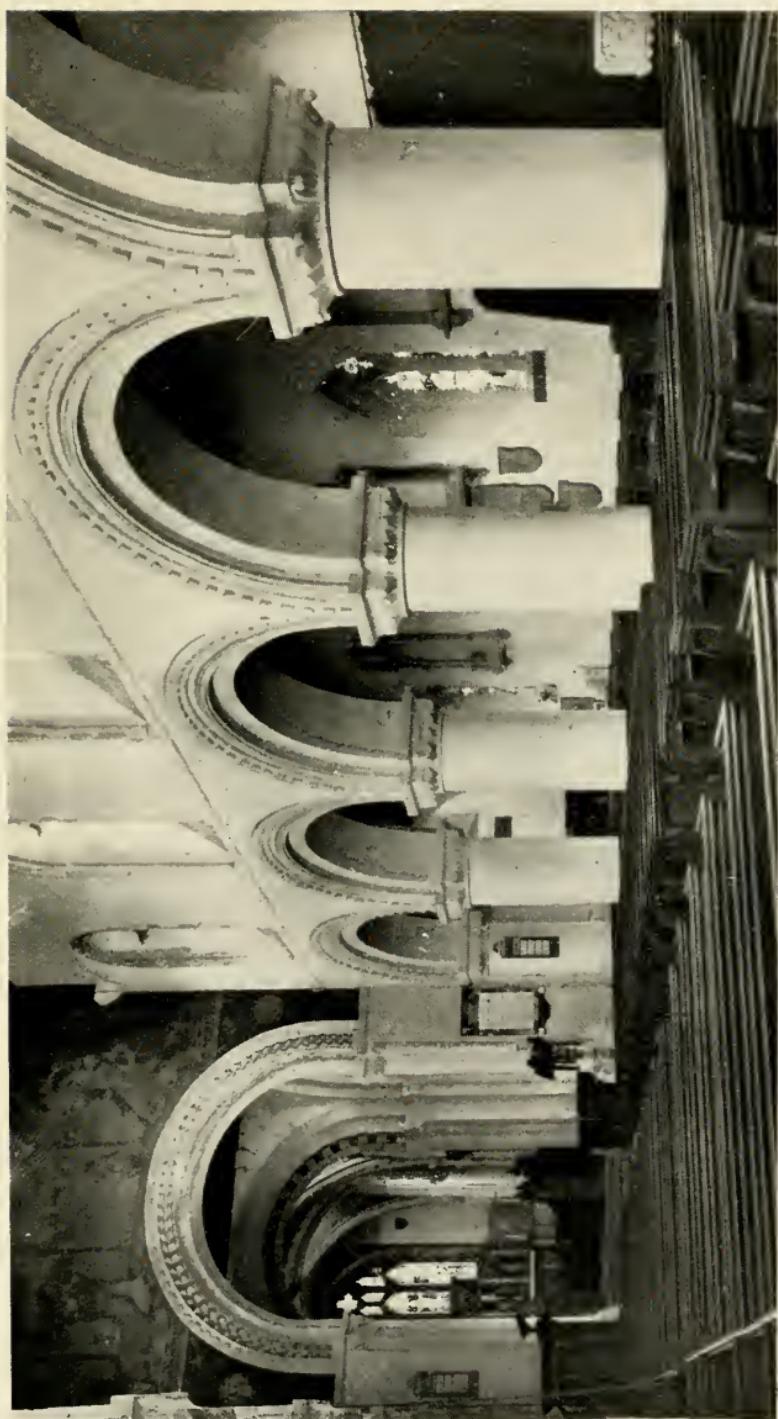
The Combe family of ancient lineage, who from the days of their first introduction to Hemel Hempstead were closely associated with The Bury manor house, and who appear in grants made by the Rector of Ashridge and by Henry VIII, have monuments to their memory within and without St. Mary's, while certain coffin

plates, bearing their arms, have of late been attached to the wall of the western aisle, thanks to the pains-taking and sympathetic efforts of the present vicar, the Rev. A. F. Robson.

One of these memorials is to Dame Ann Combe, "a dutifull and respectfull daughter to her father." She was the wife of Sir Richard Combe, who played such an important part in the history of the town. There is also a record of his son Richard, "the father's first, the family's last," 1692.

The coffin plates alluded to merit close examination, for they display the Combe Arms and are in almost perfect condition, despite the treatment meted out to the mortal remains of members of this family once interred in the crypt of St. Mary's. The tale appears incredible, but, if report be true, the need to enlarge the tomb of the Astley Paston Cooper family in the crypt was met by removing the coffins containing the bones of the Combess. Vandalism did not stop at that. The coffins were broken up, the lead sold, the coffin plates dug into the ground and—we will suppose—the bones of the departed interred in the churchyard. Thus the remains of old-time benefactors of Hemel Hempstead were disturbed to make room for the bones of a new family, while, but for a fortunate chance, when a spade struck the buried coffin plates, even these memorials of the Combe family, whose name is history in Hemel Hempstead, would have been lost.

A Richard Combe was a person of consequence in London about 1440, for he was appointed by the Crown, with others, to investigate the banks of the Thames and carry out works to prevent flooding. This history of Hemel Hempstead shews how members of the same family filled positions of importance, and we find the benefactions of Sir Francis Combe, last of that branch of the family, extending to other places in the terms of his Will made in 1641. For instance, he left lands in Abbots Langley to Sydney-Sussex College, Cambridge, and Trinity College, Oxford, one condition of the Will being that his second wife's relatives, the Greenhills, should occupy the farms at a third of the customary rent. It is on record that, a Mr. and Mrs. Greenhill, living at Abbots Langley, had a family of no fewer than 39, all with one exception single births. This is a staggering fact, particularly in these days of attenuated families, when motor cars, wireless sets and other essentials take



*St. Mary's Church. Interior.*



the place of infants, and staticians and dictators are concerned with offering advice and bounties to check a falling population. A family of 39 in those days of abundant fertility was such an astonishing feat that the Heralds College signalled the event by making an addition to the Greenhill Coat of Arms!

It is not without interest to a present generation of the inhabitants of Hemel Hempstead that Mr. G. D. A. Combes, an American citizen, and descendant of the family, still carries on the benefactions of his family by making gifts to our ancient Vill.

The death and service of a former vicar, the Rev. William de Bingham—"vicar of this parish for forty years," are recorded, and amongst other names within or without the Church are Crompton, Partridge, Salter, Grover and Puddephatt. Sir Astley Paston Cooper's association with the Parish and his death are brought to mind by a monument. He it was who owned Gadebridge Park, and gave the neighbourhood its first infirmary, at Piccots End. Sir Astley was a famous surgeon, for long on the staff of Guy's Hospital. It is said of him that, already famous as a surgeon and anatomist, he gained greater fame by removing a wart from the head of George IV. He was a generous benefactor to Hemel Hempstead, and died, much regretted, in 1841. **1356223**

Perhaps the oldest memorial of all is a "brass," recording the lives of a man and his wife in mediaeval times, for the effigies are of early origin and the inscription—now hardly decipherable—in old French. It runs:

*Robert Albyn gist ici et Merg(rite sa femme).*

*Oveke ly Deu lez alm eyt M(erci Amen).*"

*(Avec lui Dieu de leurs ames ait merci. Amen).*

A more complete description of memorials and of the men and women and children who in years past have worshipped in and been interred within or without St. Mary's is not possible. Yet the account would be incomplete without mention of a memorial, recently erected, to the lasting recollection of a devoted public servant of Hemel Hempstead, whose wisdom and gracious courtesy endeared him to a very great number within and without the parish, to whom the first freedom of the Borough was presented, and who may be said to have been the very father of modern Hemel Hempstead. The plaque, suitably

inscribed, is affixed to the arch of the tower within the nave and records the life and the work of Lovel Smeathman of South Hill.

Eight bells call the faithful to St. Mary's. John Dyer, a travelling founder, provided the first of these in 1590, and inscribed it "lawdate Domini."

During the hundreds of years which have elapsed since the Norman Lord erected the Church which forms the very heart and centre of Hemel Hempstead, many ecclesiastical changes have taken place, religion itself has undergone some drastic alterations, and a host of Vicars have filled the vicarage. The list is complete from Guy de Palude, presented in 1244 by the Earl of Cornwall. In 1328 there is a significant change in the patronage, for the Rector and Convent of Ashridge now appointed John de Grantham, and continued to appoint the vicars right up to the date of the Dissolution of the Monasteries and of Ashridge, in 1539. During more than two hundred years the Rector of Ashridge took for his Monastery the larger part of the tithes and other perquisites coming from the manor of Hemel Hempstead, requiring the Vicar of St. Mary's to officiate at that church and in the northern end of the manor, and to provide curates for the Chapels of Ease which were erected at Bovingdon and Flaunden. The latter was an arrangement which continued long after the Dissolution, and which in time led to disputes between the vicar and churchwardens of St. Mary's, and the curates and churchwardens of St. Lawrence, Bovingdon, and St. Mary Magdalen, Flaunden. This latter church stood beside the Chess and is now a ruin. Doubtless, it accommodated the then inhabitants of Flaunden. But it was not so often that a curate appeared upon the scene. He came a horseback from Hemel Hempstead, and a man stationed upon the tower of Bovingdon church watched for his figure climbing Box Lane Hill and signalled down to Flaunden. It appears that wet days damped the ardour of would be visiting curates!

A few notes relating to the method of providing the rector of Ashridge and the vicar of Hemel Hempstead with a living may be of interest. The tithe and the glebe were apportioned to them. A tenth sheaf of corn, bundle of hay or cord of wood constituted great tithe, and was taken by the rector of Ashridge, besides, of course, his rents from tenants of the Manor lands. The lesser

tithe went to the Vicar and was made up of a tenth beast, a tenth hen, and the same proportion of eggs, milk and so forth. Naturally enough, the collection of these tenths provided a problem, so that it became the custom to farm out the tithes. In 1837 an act of parliament caused them to be commuted throughout the country, and we find that the gross amount for Hemel Hempstead came to £1,818 15s. 9d.—for Bovingdon £710 and for Flaunden £160 6s. 0d. Of the great tithe the rector of Ashridge took three fourths, leaving the unfortunate vicar of Hemel Hempstead to find the costs of his own household and to support the ministers and the Chapels of Ease at Bovingdon and Flaunden out of the remaining quarter. But it should be added that there was still the vicarage glebe. There was the vicarage itself and its grounds projecting into the demesne of the Bury house and stretching along the western edge of the High Street, now covered with shops, with the great tithe barns behind, now in a state of dilapidation. Where the weekly market is now held stood "The Lamb" public house, part of the endowment of the vicarage, but long since demolished. There were too, the parsonage house at Bovingdon, where the curate lived house free, and one also at Flaunden.

Bovingdon and Flaunden contributed 20 shillings annually toward the stipend of their curates, and provided a rope for the middle bell of St. Mary's. Part of this agreement seems to have been made about the year 1428, together with consent to bear a third of the cost of repairs to the mother church, when necessary, and repairs to the churchyard fence. But the outlying manors of Bovingdon and Flaunden were becoming populated. From a visiting minister they had now a resident minister. A spirit of independence began to grow, and round about 1706 their churchwardens revolted when called upon to pay for repairs to St. Mary's. They claimed complete separation of their churches, though it was not till 1833 that the parishes were separated from that of Hemel Hempstead. The vestry accounts for St. Mary's give a last record concerning the bell rope, in 1741, "Received of Bovingdon officers for a bell rope—5/-."

It is hardly to be supposed that every succeeding Vicar of Hemel Hempstead led a peaceful existence amidst the sylvan scenery by which he was surrounded. The march of time brought drastic

changes in the religion of the land, and while some of the incumbents may have walked warily in changing times, there were others more courageous perhaps, or less discreet, who gave open and emphatic expression of their disapproval.

A short summary of events will help to remind us of the nature of these changes, particularly those which occurred between the year 1534, when Henry VIII abolished the supremacy of the Pope, and 1689, when the "Toleration Act" was first promulgated. In 1549 use of the first prayer book was enforced by an "Act of Uniformity." Then, in 1553, the tide turned in the opposite direction, as Mary ascended the throne, and Roman Catholicism once more became practically the only permitted religion. In 1559 Elizabeth published a second "Act of Uniformity," together with a revised prayer book. But tolerance was not too greatly in evidence, for though a form of Protestantism was permitted, every man and woman and child was compelled to attend a church, on pain of prosecution and punishment.

From 1559 until 1689 the course of public religion was marred by the ebb and flow of a struggle between the Established Church and non-conformity, until, in fact, the "Toleration Act" gave a decided measure of freedom as to religious practice.

During this relatively short period in the long history of the ancient Church of St. Mary more than one Vicar was openly sympathetic to non-conformity, one at least gave loud voice to his objections to the wearing of the surplice, three were rejected from the benefice, and two went to prison in support of their opinions. Thereafter an era of relative peace and tranquillity came to all parts of the country. Quakers, non-conformists of every shade of opinion could go their ways unharmed, and there was no longer need to achieve religious freedom by taking ship for America and elsewhere. The Vicars of St. Mary's continued their ministrations amongst the people of the ancient vill, and at Bovingdon and Flaunden, freed from a bitterness which must be in evidence where religious differences and lack of toleration divide the several members of a parish.

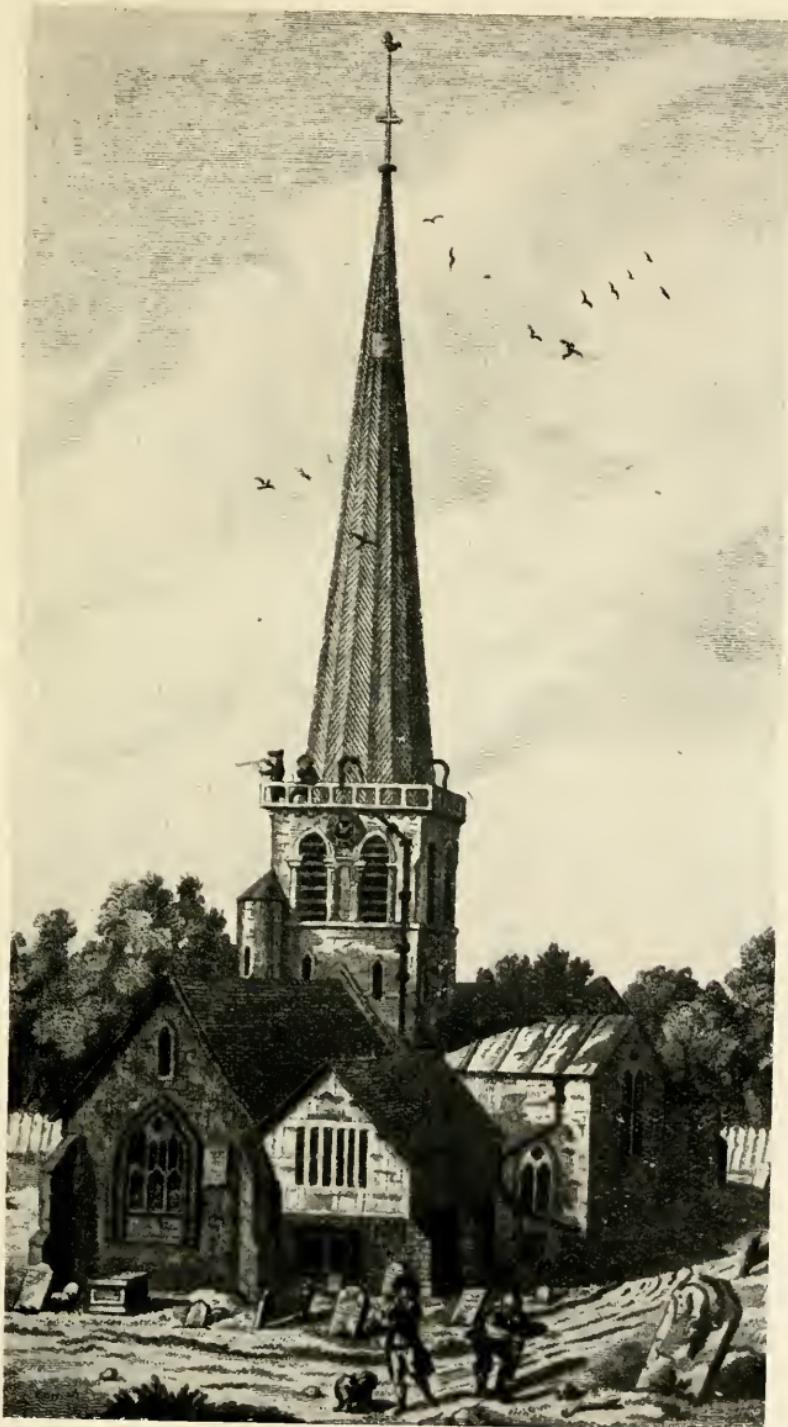
Just as St. Mary's Church became at its foundation and has remained to this day the nodal centre of our ancient town, so, like the Bailiwick founded by Henry VIII, it has preserved for us a

written history which tells us something of the life of earlier generations. The books of the Bailiwick record the names of Bailiffs, of Town Criers and so forth. The Vestry Register of St. Mary's, carefully guarded, yields throughout its many closely-written parchment pages the names of thousands of the departed, of those who saw the light first in the ancient vill, and of those many happy couples who were married. From its lines we can extract a note of tragedy here and there. A stranger dies, a wife and newly-born babe are buried, a woman kills herself, and a man is drowned in the river.

The first wedding is recorded in 1558, and so also the first burial. The register for baptisms was opened in 1566. Wrestling with the difficult writing it is possible to follow in some measure the fortunes of a variety of families, the Hows, the Fields, the Gladmans, Bunns, Dells, Dolts, Stanbridges, Besouths and others. We get other familiar names, to be discovered also in the Bailiwick books, either as Bailiffs or as renters of market stalls. In the 17th Century we begin to see such names as Salter, Culverhouse, Selden, Glenister, Kingham, Tarbox, Marston, Durrant, Marlowe, from whom perhaps, Marlowes springs, and so on, and before the first book closes in 1657 we come upon entries which are of more than ordinary interest. Indeed, the register provides us with something approaching an exciting mystery. A certain John Warren was clerk in 1647, and we find his entries in the baptismal register emphasising the relative importance of certain individuals. For instance, when Aaron, "ye sonne of William Russell," was borne, the entry, having regard to the relationship to the Earl of Bedford's family, is in very large lettering. Then we have "1653, Julye ye VIII daie, Constance the daughter of John Milton, was borne," and again "1655, October ye XIII daye, John the sonne of John Milton was borne." Both entries are in significantly large lettering. What is the reason? Can these entries relate to *the* John Milton, just about then Latin Secretary to Oliver Cromwell, a renowned man of letters, not long afterwards to issue his magnum opus, "Paradise Lost?"

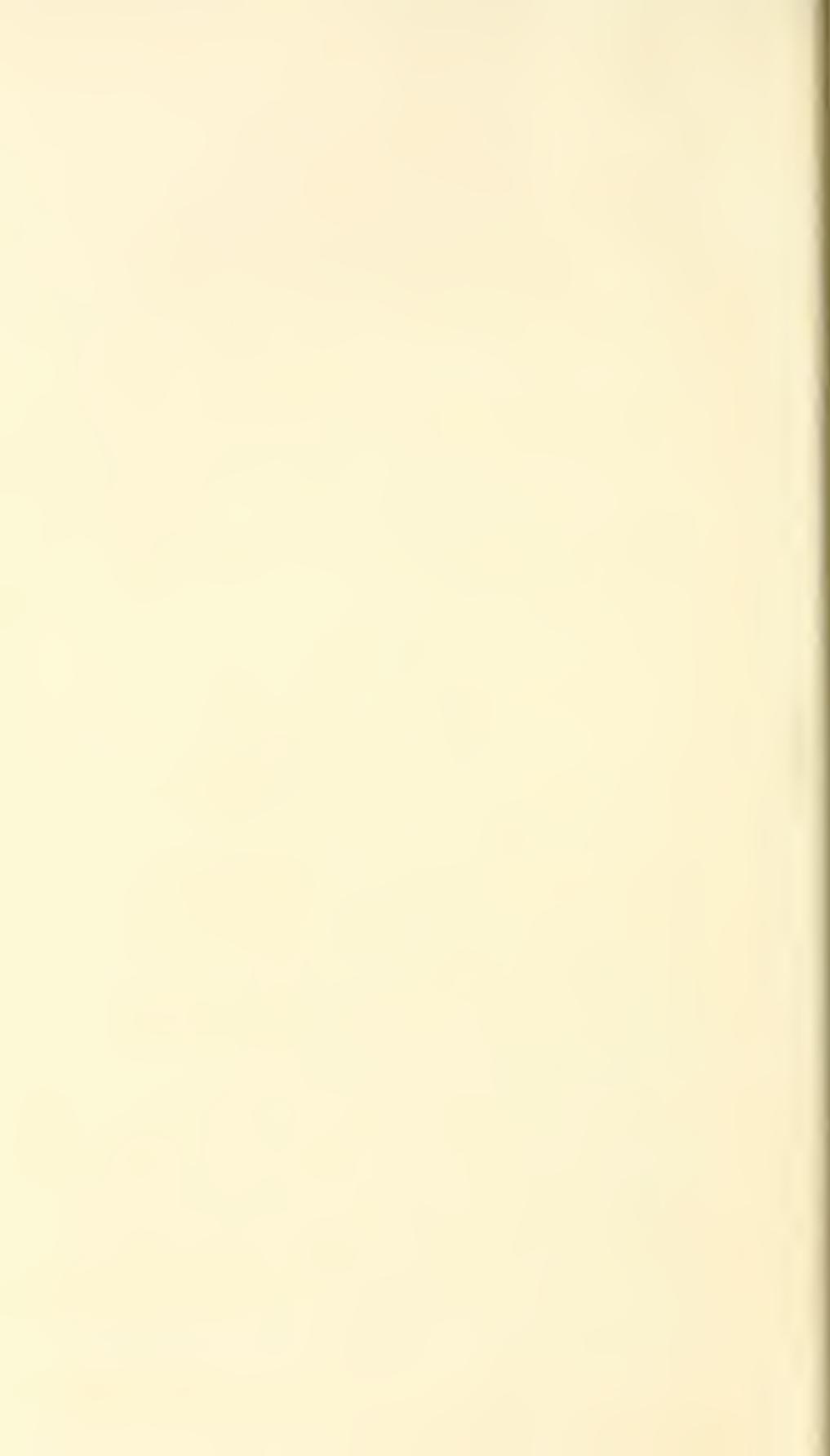
Milton lost his first wife in 1652, and married again in 1656. He was about 44 years of age in 1652 and already totally blind. Is it likely that these were his children? It appears scarcely credible. Yet, why those lines of magnified letters? What other Milton was

there in those days of such importance that the clerk of St. Mary's must signalise the fact by making the record distinct from others ? It may be a mystery. It is said that, at this same date, a John Milton signed the books of the Honourable Artillery Company. Perhaps he is the John Milton whose children are registered at St. Mary's. Maybe they were actually the offspring of the great author. Some citizen of Hemel Hempstead may some day further investigate the matter.



*St. Mary's Church  
(from an old print)*

*(By Courtesy of A. E. Usher, Esq.)*



### *Chapter 6.*

#### ANCIENT CUSTOMS, MONASTERIES AND HENRY VIII.

Ancient customs and old ways of doing things die a hard death, and Hemel Hempstead provides us with a plethora of examples of this well-known saying. Just to take examples, in those days when the tenancy of lands was acknowledged by the payment of a token rather than of money, one of the sub-manors of the manor of Hemel paid annually "a pound of cummin at Michaelmas." At Berkhamsted a tenant acknowledged his indebtedness to the lord of the honour by providing a clove or a gilliflower "at such times as anie King or Queen—shall be crowned in the castle" probably meaning when the Royal house was resident there; and the Manor of Southall, lying immediately to the north of Piccotts End, in the parish of Great Gaddesden, and no doubt carved out of that manor, was rented at the cost of a knight's fee and half a knight's fee—some thirty pounds in those days—and a pair of fur-lined gloves. The celebrated John de Gatesdene—philosopher and physician—was tenant of this manor about 1250.

These and many other queer customs continued for long, and in fact, almost up to the present day. No doubt they owed their existence to the methods commonly in force at or before the Conquest, when circumstances made the payment of dues in some form other than in currency almost a necessity. Coins of the Realm were relatively rare in those days. A man might hold wide-spreading acres, with beasts galore, ploughing tackle and farm implements, etc., but have no cash in his purse, and certainly none locked up in a bank, since they did not exist. Capital as we know it hardly existed. The land was a man's capital, and the crops his dividends. Consequently we find the lord of a manor in and around the Conqueror's time receiving rents in the form of service, or in the fruits of the land.

Service was distinguishable as "free" and "base," and he who held his land by base service was ever at work endeavouring to improve his condition so that he gave only free service. Until

well within the sixteenth century this struggle continued, for the one who gave "free" service was a freeman. He was life tenant of his land, and could pass it on to his heir, provided he paid his rent, in whatever form was agreed with the lord of the manor, and his heir paid the "fine" and the "heriot" due on all such occasions.

The "fine" is one of those ancient customs which still exist. It owed its origin to the time when men could not of certainty succeed to their lands, when in fact, they were not yet "freemen." Others might compete for a vacant farm, and might offer a higher price than did the heir. To put an end to haggling and disappointment a basis for these "fines" was fixed in the majority of manors, the lord's steward sitting with a jury of manorial tenants in the Manor Court to assess the amount.

The "heriot" was another form of fine, and like the latter was fixed by a manorial jury. Its origin dates back to very early times, when, because of the poverty of his villeins and serfs a lord of the manor found it necessary to provide them with the necessary implements of husbandry, together with stock for each farm. These had to be handed over at death, or when the holding went to a successor. As tenants won independence and comparative wealth this outlay on the part of the lord of the manor became unnecessary, but the "heriot" demanded on a change of tenancy in earlier days, as a token of the lord's rights, persisted right up to recent times.

It gave the lord the right to take the first beast or the first plough, bed, chair or other chattel on the passing of a tenancy from one man to another. In the case of the Manor of Hemel Hempstead, however, it was not the first, but the second beast and so forth.

From 1066 till Henry VIII appeared upon the scene one may say that a struggle for freedom and emancipation was carried on by the tenants of farms throughout England, and certainly in Hemel Hempstead. We know that Edmund de Cornwall manumitted the villeins in 1277 when he made over the manor to the Rector and Brethren of Ashridge. They became, at a stroke of the pen "freemen." They sought further freedom. In the course of time they commuted personal service for cash payments, otherwise a rent, and while admitting the lord's right to a "fine" and a "heriot" they began to resist any sort of interference on his

part, particularly entry upon their holding. The struggle developed till a large part of the Manor of Hemel Hempstead was divided into copyholds, that is to say, lands descending to heirs, or transferred at the wish of a copyholder to some successor selected by himself. But formal approval had to be given by the lord of the manor, whose steward sat in the Manorial Court with a jury of not less than twelve tenants of the manor. The copyholder handed over a "rod," or other token, indicating that he acknowledged the lord's right to the land. He paid the "fine" and the rod was then handed to the successor, who also received a copy of the formal entry made in the records of the Court. He now held the land by virtue of that copy, and was forthwith a "copyholder."

Military service, such an important item at the time of the Conquest, by promise of which knights and lesser knights obtained their lands, came in time to be exchanged for "scutage," that is, a payment in cash. And there were other lords, knights and tenants who paid their dues in a totally different manner. Abbeys and Monasteries and other religious houses had no scruples about accepting tithes, the rents for use of mills, and payments in one form or another. But many of their tenants held their lands of the Rector and Brethren of Ashridge, for instance, in "Frankalmoign." For rent they gave service of a kind. They "made prayers and other divine services for the souls of the grantor and his heirs," just as the brethren gave prayers and services for the soul of the noble founder, Edmund de Cornwall.

We may visualise the Rector and Brethren of Ashridge, secluded in their wonderful park, going about their duties clad in the sky-blue habit of their Augustinian order. These twenty monks, of whom thirteen were priests, held wide-spreading acres in Little Gaddesden, Pitstone, Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead, and valuable perquisites in Hemel. For instance, they held the right to the return of the king's writs and pleas; goods of felons and fugitives became theirs, and amongst other privileges, they paid no tolls or dues to the "burrough of Berkhamstead."

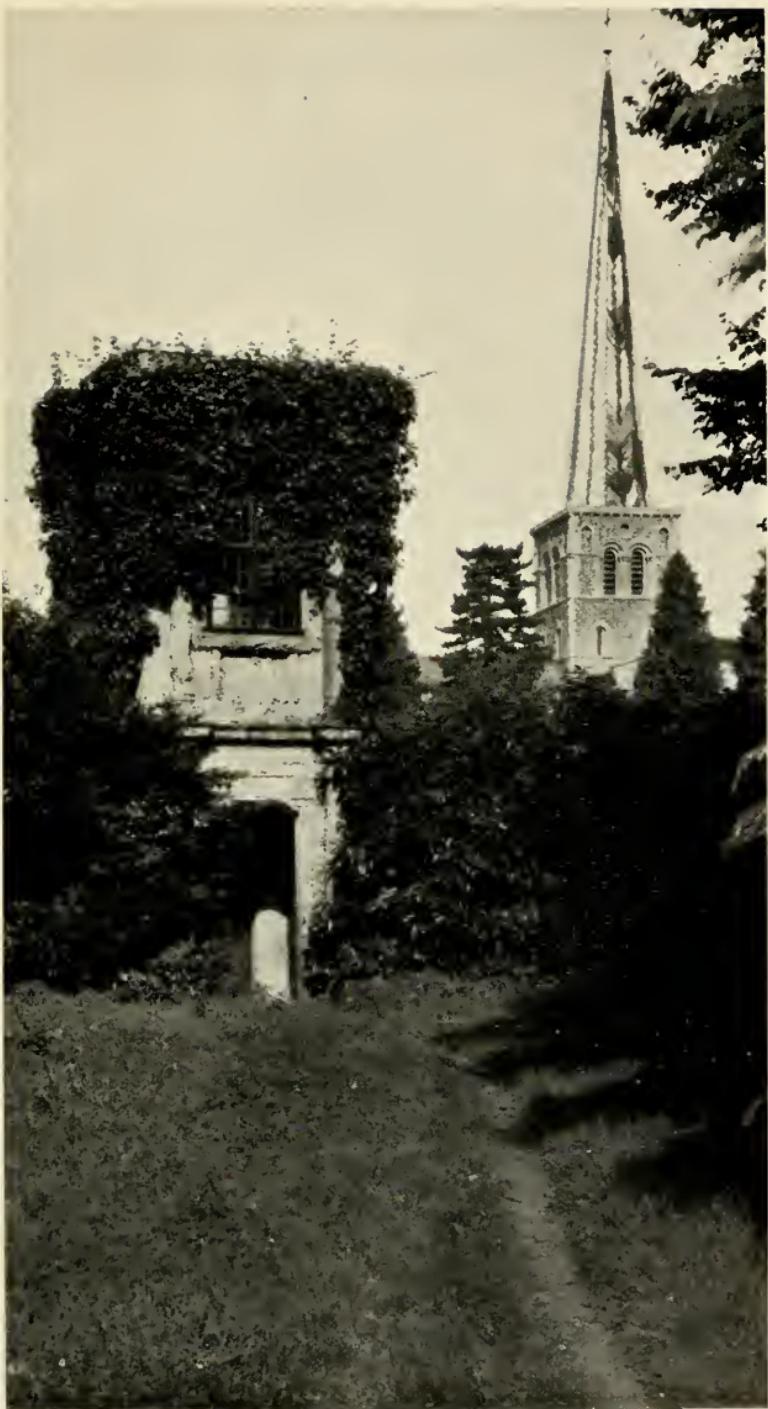
One other source of revenue came their way. Like many other religious houses they attracted pilgrims, who paid to glimpse the relics for which individual houses became famous. At St. Albans the bones of St. Alban, the martyr, interred under the altar, drew

a multitude of people and pence. It is true that a Danish invasion long before the Conquest had resulted in the looting of these bones. But the monks were not too discouraged. Presently they sent a monk to reside at a Danish monastery, and he, so it is said, purloined the relic and returned in triumph. But another hitch occurred. On news of a repeated Danish invasion the Abbot packed the bones and sent them to a religious house elsewhere, for safe custody while the Danes were campaigning in the neighbourhood of St. Albans. That religious house refused to return the relic. But the Abbot was by no means put out. He proclaimed that the bones he had sent were not the real relics of St. Alban. They were substitutes, the actual bones having been hidden in the Abbey. So pilgrims came as before, paying pence, and no doubt, deriving comfort from viewing the martyr's remains.

Ashridge must have felt this competition, which drew pilgrims from their park to St. Albans. Edmund de Cornwall gave them a counter attraction. It was a drop of the Blood of Christ, which he had purchased abroad and divided, sending one half to Ashridge and the other to a religious house in Herefordshire, which he had also founded. Like the bones of St. Alban, the relic was of doubtful origin, for, at the dissolution, it was found to consist of a drop of honey stained with saffron. "Sic transit gloria mundi!"

A Manor Court dealt exclusively with manorial questions as between the lord of the manor and his tenants, or as between tenant and tenant. It did not venture to deal with civil or criminal cases, which were the work of the Crown. But Courts Leet for the trial of such cases had sat in each hundred long before William 1st invaded England, and they were continued in many of the manors, the lord purchasing the right of the Crown, thereby helping his tenants, who were saved the necessity of travelling to some far-off Court. In practice, however, Courts Leet sat infrequently, so that offenders were kept for weeks and months awaiting trial of even trivial charges.

One wonders how Hemel Hempstead and its inhabitants fared in the long years between the Conquest and the gift of its first charter in 1539, by Henry VIII. So many rumours of wars swept over their heads, and often warring parties must have marched very near to the manor. Perhaps the squabble between Maud



*R*eputed Trysting Place of Henry VIII  
and Anne Boleyn.



and Stephen made no impression. The news that Thomas A'Becket had been murdered on the altar steps of Canterbury Cathedral may have given rise to anxious talk in the hutments along Bury Road and High Street. Surely the signing of Magna Charta in 1215 will have caused some rejoicing, while the barons' wars, Louis the French King besieging Berkhamsted Castle, the doings at Calais, Crecy and Poictiers cannot have failed to stir the husbandmen in the manor, just as Wat Tyler's rebellion in 1381 may have brought alarm into the vill.

Agincourt and news of the Maid of Orleans will have filtered through, and who knows? Men of Hemel Hempstead may have been participants in some of the foregoing adventures. The Wars of the Roses may well have caught some of the younger bloods, sons of the yeomen farmers of the manor, and one can believe that the victory of the White, Yorkist Rose at St. Albans in 1455, the triumph of the Red, Lancastrian Rose at the same place in 1461, and the final victory of the Yorkists at Barnet, within a march of Hemel Hempstead, in 1471, brought consternation or hilarious joy to some of the then members of the ancient vill. It is said that 10 Princes, 200 nobles and some 100,000 gentlemen and soldiers of greater or less degree lost their lives in this unfortunate conflict. How likely, then, that some of the sons of Hemel Hempstead were snatched up in the whirlwind of those times.

Henry VII's marriage to Mary, daughter of Edward IV, brought peace to the suffering land, and no doubt the men of the manor continued to till their fields and to recover further tillage by clearing the ground of trees. Those sun-dried, well-drained slopes of the Chiltern Hills were already famous for the corn they grew. Hemel Hempstead was already a corn market, and very soon, with the Charter to be shortly given, offering a weekly market and a fair, it was to be known as "the very granary of London."

About the year 1535 a fair lady had come from the direction of Aylesbury, where her people lived, and was staying at the Lockers, half way up Bury Hill. She was Anne Boleyn, the latest court favourite, and was soon, but for so tragically short a time, for she was beheaded in 1536, queen of the realm.

The bluff, ponderous figure of Henry VIII had appeared upon the

scene. He was being entertained by his court accountant, John Waterhouse, steward of the manor, and lessee with Richard Combe of the Bury demesne. John's brother was Thomas Waterhouse, Rector of Ashridge.

It seems to be generally thought in Hemel Hempstead that John Waterhouse and his partner Richard Combe placed the small room one sees to-day perched on the old wall which surrounds the Bury kitchen garden at the disposal of their rather terrifying Royal master so that he might carry on a flirtation with Anne Boleyn in the privacy of that chamber. But, alas for legend! This wall room was part of a Bury house built by Richard Combe after the gift of the first Charter, long after the unfortunate Anne had paid with her head for her conquest of bluff, unscrupulous, philandering Henry.

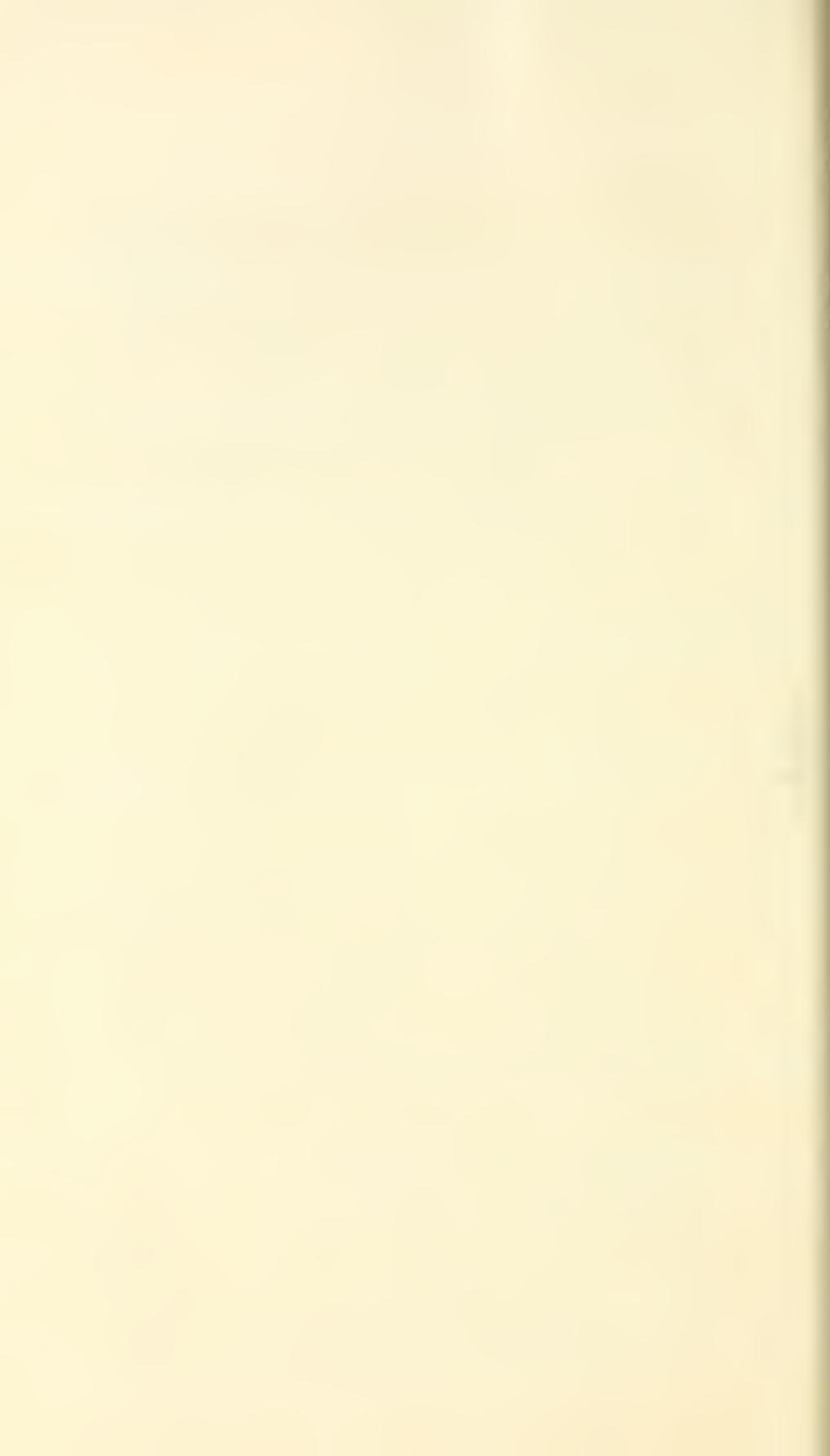
Legend says, too, that a narrow flight of steps in the Bury kitchen garden leads to the Crypt of St. Mary's, and across the meadow westward, beneath the Gade to The Lockers. That may be so. It is rumoured that, in a dry summer, a sailor home on leave, embarked on a sight-seeing trip via these steps and tunnel, and actually hammered on the inner door of the Crypt. It is possible, however, that the steps once led to Richard Combe's cellar, though, lest anyone should suggest that that held up the return of the aforementioned sailor, we hasten to suggest that wine stored three hundred years ago would be most decidedly undrinkable!

A Norman Bury house probably replaced the Saxon Bury. Perhaps the Manor House was pulled down and rebuilt on two or three occasions. The island site, surrounded by its moat must have been damp, so that, presently—and it may have been Richard Combe—someone erected a new Bury house slightly nearer the Church. Years later a different site was chosen and a new manor built where Bury House now stands, and it appears that that too was demolished, to be replaced by the present residence. It is worth remembering that the immediate neighbourhood of the Bury has been inhabited possibly for at least a thousand years.

Pleased with the royal welcome he had received, basking in the smiles of Anne, King Henry VIII offered the ancient vill of Hemel Hempstead a Charter, and some three years later, on December 29th, 1539, that epoch-making document was given to "The



*The Bury House.*



Bailiff and Inhabitants." William Stephyns was selected by the king as the first Bailiff, and thenceforth, with the powers conferred by the Charter, to hold a market every Thursday, a yearly fair and a court of Pie Powder, Hemel Hempstead may be said to have taken on a new lease of life, and to have risen from the mere vill it had been to the place of quite considerable importance it soon became. Indeed, as the castle at Berkhamsted sank into ruins, and royalty left the town Berkhamsted was no longer the important neighbour it had been. It was now Hemel Hempstead which developed because of its new opportunities, while its farmers and its millers waxed prosperous because of the cargoes of corn and flour they sent weekly by boat or by road into London.

The Court of Pie Powder—Pied Poudre—needs a word of explanation. It was of ancient origin and, it would appear, designed in particular for vills where markets and fairs were held. These weekly or annual events no doubt attracted then, as they perhaps do to-day, a medley of individuals more or less strangers to the vill, and amongst them vagrants, roughs, idlers, mountebanks, thieves, and so on. Offenders at these markets or fairs were haled before the Pie Powder Court, where they received summary sentence, literally while the dust of the market or fair was still on their feet.

## *Chapter 7.*

### EARLY DAYS IN THE BAILIWICK.

A new era opened for Hemel Hempstead and the tenants of the surrounding manor lands immediately on the receipt of Henry VIII's Charter, dated December 29th, 1539. The vill had become literally, at the stroke of a pen, a Bailiwick. A Bailiff was already elected, chosen by the great king himself, and that important person, Willyam Stephyn, was empowered to elect a jury, to consult with them as to the affairs of the Bailiwick, and to make arrangements for a weekly market, and for a fair once yearly, the former to be held every Thursday, and the latter on Corpus Christi day, that is to say, on May 29th. He and his jury were also empowered to hold a Pie Powder Court on market days, before which misdemeanours associated with the market might be tried and dealt with.

It should be borne in mind that the manor existed much as it was before the Dissolution of the monasteries. Thomas Waterhouse, late Rector of Ashridge, and his brethren had been banished, and were no longer a power in the manor. Their estate had passed to the King. But a steward still lived at the Bury, namely Richard Combe, manorial courts and courts leet were still held, and tenants continued to pay their rents either by token, or by cash, or by the fruits of their lands.

The Charter had given a new freedom to the inhabitants of the vill and manor, and the market brought prosperity. No doubt it took time to discover the value of the new opportunities and to make full use of them. Few records exist of those years immediately following the gift of the Charter. But the present Corporation of Hemel Hempstead has inherited some priceless documents in which the history of progress and change in the vill and the manor can be followed during all the years from 1619 onwards. Three of the Bailiwick minute books exist, filled with closely written pages, setting forth in sufficient detail the major happenings—as well as many of the minor doings—of the people of Hemel Hempstead during all that time. The first book runs from 1619 to 1773. The

second from that date to 1856, and the third right up to 1898, when the vill, now grown out of all knowledge, was granted another Charter, incorporating it and adjacent vills as a Borough.

In the meanwhile other Charters had been presented, so that, in addition to the minute books already enumerated, and sundry other ancient documents, the Town Clerk is to-day the custodian of no fewer than six Charters. Henry VIII, Elizabeth, James I, Oliver Cromwell, Charles I, William and Mary. There is, of course, the more recent Charter of Incorporation as a Borough which, undoubtedly, has, like that of Henry VIII, exercised for the great benefit of the inhabitants. But the old Charters are of greater historical interest and value, and the Corporation are to be congratulated on their prescience in having each of the Charters, together with their seals, mounted in hermetically-sealed glass frames, where, with reasonable treatment, they should be safe for all time.

With the Dissolution of the monasteries came a break up of the immense holdings of the religious houses. Though the manor of Hemel Hempstead was not sold off to Court favourites, the march of progress and of liberty brought greater freedom to tenants. They became in the course of time freeholders or copyholders, and in still more time the Crown parted with its rights, and tenants sold to people who had come from some other district. The same process was at work elsewhere, even more rapidly. Freeholding farmers of small estate—yeomen farmers in fact—hastened to add to their acres, while Court favourites obtained estates by payment to the Augmentation Fund, and, re-sold to merchants from London and other cities. A nouveau riche class was appearing in the country, doubtless the progenitors of many of the present landed or so-called “county” families. In fact, huge estates were being broken up, just as we have seen happen since the Great War. The dissolution of religious houses brought about the change, or at least facilitated it in the sixteenth century, while greatly increased taxation, direct and indirect, led to the changes which people of to-day have witnessed. It should be added that the Dissolution, currently supposed to have led to great hardship, even starvation amongst the abbots and monks of the numerous religious houses, was not, in fact, followed

by any such condition. The king's ministers, and families which had founded religious houses provided benefices for a great number of Abbots, rectors and monks, all with sufficient stipends, while those not so accommodated, and who did not wish to re-enter some religious house still allowed to remain in being, received adequate pensions, paid from the Augmentation Fund into which the new grantees of land paid cash for their holdings. Just to give one example. In 1540 Richard Combe, of Hempsteadbury, the ancient holding of the first Saxon, bought the reversion of the property he occupied, the Bury demesne, in fact, with its fields and meadows, its mill and its fishery. He paid the Crown £108, which if multiplied by about twenty-five will give a fair indication of the present-day value of the payment. Thomas Waterhouse, late Rector of Ashridge, was adequately provided for, and not, as one has been led to imagine, thrown out into a cold and friendless world.

Finally, it should be borne in mind that sale of land in Hemel Hempstead and elsewhere did not expunge Manorial Rights. The Crown held those appertaining to Hemel Hempstead and leased them in 1717 to Thomas Halsey, extending the lease until 1815, when the manor rights were purchased by the Halsey family, and remained in their hands till all rights of similar character were commuted by recent Act of Parliament.

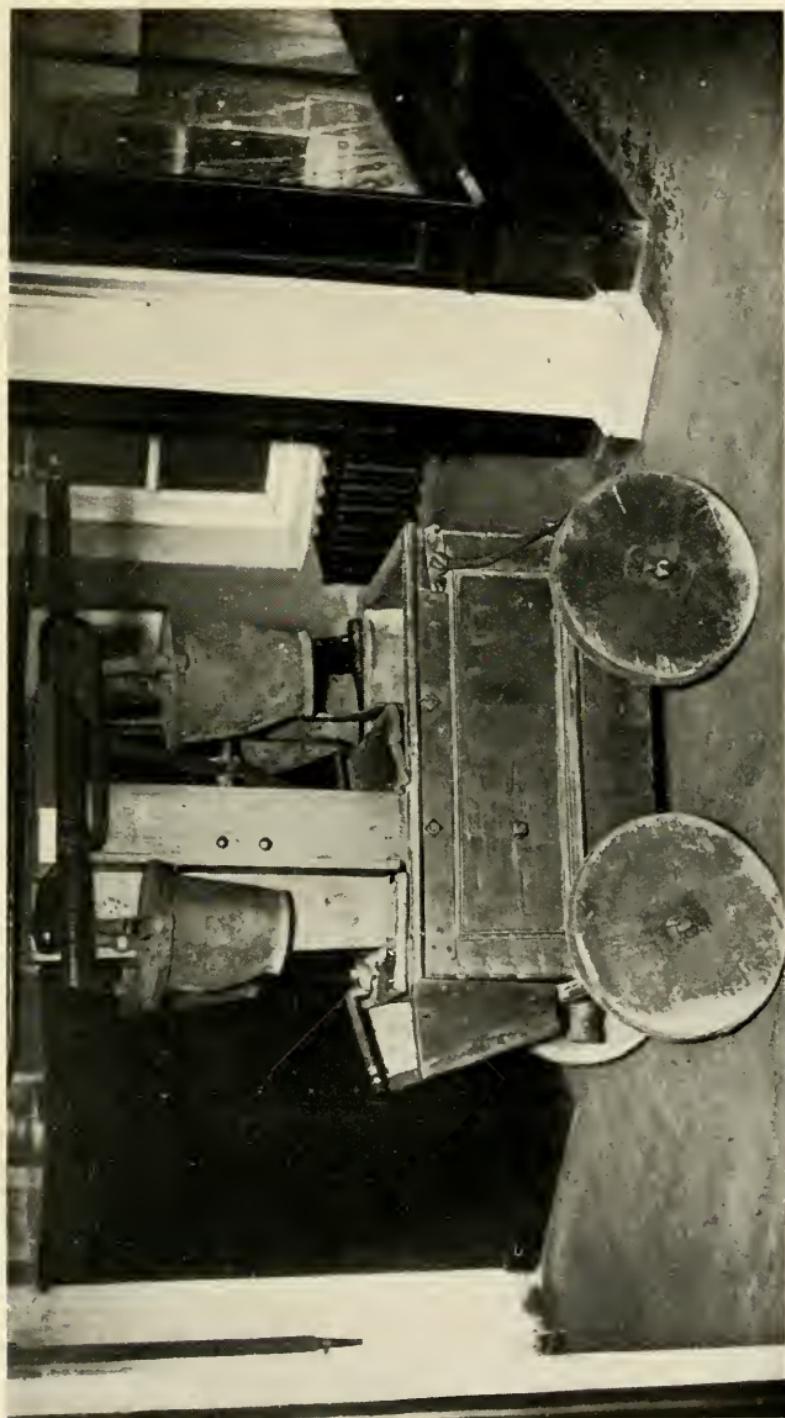
Very early on in the first of the minute books written up by recorders of Hemel Hempstead we have an entry which should interest the present city fathers and the inhabitants, for it gives us the *fons et origo* of a controversy which has shaken the town to its foundations on more than one occasion. It is dated "The Twentieth day of January, 1659."

"Received then of the town of Hemel Hempstead the som of thirty pounds of lawfull English monye in full for their engine by me made. I say received in full as aforsaid. Anthony Greene. Living att the Candlestick in Lothbury, London."

Years later the fire engine was supplemented by the addition of fire buckets; for instance:

"April 15th, 1702. Paid William Weston for five dozen of leather buckets. £4 0s. 0d."

These, however, are not by any means the only references to the



*Facsimile of Earliest Fire Engine.*

*(By Courtesy of Herts Advertiser).*



engine and the buckets, for the yearly accounts of every Bailiff contain items such as the following :

“ Paid for greasing of the engine.” Or “ Paid for tallow for greasing the engine.” “ Paid Brickland for thawing the ice and playing the engine 5s. 6d.”

It seemed to be the custom to bring this wonderful machine into the light of day on the occasion of the annual fair, or when celebrating some event of particular importance. For then the minute book has entered in the Bailiff’s accounts :

“ Paid to the men for playing of the engine. 10s.”

This is sometimes followed by an entry relating to repairs to the engine, perhaps due to excessive energy of the “ men playing the engine,” and for this reason. Every occasion of this playing is accompanied by this type of announcement :

“ Paid for bere for the men playing the engine,” or “ Paid for bere and liquors when the fire happened. £1 9s. 0d.”

It would seem, therefore, that the engine was of some real use, and in fact, on January 2nd, 1749, there was a terrible fire at the market house, in that portion known as the “ women’s markett,” when the whole town was threatened. This house was part of the vicar’s glebe, and the minutes go on to tell us of a meeting of the Bailiff and his jury who, in consideration of the great loss suffered by the vicar, and of the high regard they had for him, proposed to devote some of the income from the Bailiwick to the necessary re-building operations.

We are left in doubt as to the life history of this particular fire engine. It is hardly credible that a crude instrument, as one supposes it to have been, delivered in 1659, could have remained in commission for more than a hundred years. That it received due attention is beyond doubt. Money was annually spent on its maintenance. But there is no discoverable entry relating to a replacement. There is, however, an item which makes it appear as if the machine had been forgotten. A question arose as to its ownership, whereon the Bailiwick, there being no rival claimant, accepted the responsibility.

Duties which had at one time devolved upon the steward of the manor and his jury were now carried out by the Bailiff, who appears to have appointed, yearly, constables to guard the peace of the vill,

one for Highstreet side, one for Boxted side, and others for the out-lying parts. Tryers of ale and bread and flesh and butter were needed, and the minute book tells us curtly, yet sufficiently, how well these duties were carried out. Time and again we have the following entry :

“ Paid for bread and butter, cheese and bere when we weighed the butter.”

“ Spent ye 8th September, at the Widdow Hills when the weights were weighed.”

It seems as if on every possible occasion or excuse the worthy Bailiff and his jury and constables hied them to some place of refreshment, leaving the recorder to enter the amount spent. And there must have been from time to time favourite resorts. “ The Bell,” “ The Cock,” “ The King’s Arms,” and other public-houses are mentioned, but none of them so frequently in any one year, nor over such a length of years as the “ Widdow Hills.” Was her “ bere ” of superlative excellence, ? one asks, or were the attractions of this one time citizen of Hemel Hempstead of a sort to lure the vill’s fathers to the spot, to the great profit of the lady ?

“ Paid to Seth Partridge for bread, cakes and bere the same time that I was chosen Bailiff.”

“ Spent upon the jury the next Thursday after.”

“ Paid Ffrancis Chapman for a vessel of bere in the markett when the Queen was proclaimed, and for bere and tobacco and bread and shoes in the house for the soldiers as by this bill. £2 3s. 6d.”

And “ Paid for ringing on the Queen’s birthday.”

And “ To the jury when the engines were played. 8s. 6d.”

The Queen above referred to was Anne, who succeeded Mary. There was a burst of entertaining upon the part of the Bailiff and his men on April 11th, 1713, when Marlborough’s successes at Blenheim and elsewhere resulted in the treaty of Utrecht. We have in the minutes :

“ Paid at several places when peace was proclaimed. £4 7s. 6d.”

Followed on August 29th when George I came to the throne by :

“ Paid at several places when the King was proclaimed. £3 18s. 0d.”

From these instances, and many others which can be seen by

those who care to wrestle with the weird script of those days, it becomes apparent that the Bailiff and his jury, the constables and many others inhabiting the ancient vill of Hemel Hempstead, contrived to keep body and soul together, and to conduct the affairs of the vill efficently, and at the same time to their great diversion.

### *Chapter 8.*

#### SOME BAILIFFS OF HEMEL HEMPSTEAD.

Some four hundred years have now elapsed since the great Henry VIII put ancient Hemel Hempstead upon the road to prosperity, if not to actual fame. It speaks well for the industry of those who have gone before us that the written word is left for present day inhabitants to read and understand much of what has happened. The list of Bailiffs, of High Bailiffs, of Recorders, of Mayors and Bailiffs and of Town Clerks is one the completeness of which is almost staggering.

We know that Willyam Stephyns heads the list of Bailiffs for he was appointed by Henry VIII on Monday, December 29th, 1539. Not until 1571 do we get the name of a successor, and then it is that of a family which must be familiar to many inside and outside the present Borough. Thomas Howe was the man, and the minute books throughout those four hundred years have frequent references to this ancient family, members of which are still actively engaged in the affairs of the town.

There is another gap in the record till 1592, when the familiar name of Francis Coombe is recorded ; and in 1618 Thomas Axtell is chosen as Bailiff. From that date right up to the present day there is an unbroken record of the citizens of the vill, and after 1898, of the Borough, considered by the inhabitants to be sufficiently worthy to be elected to the office of Bailiff, or of Mayor and Bailiff. It is true, however, that the writing of those early recorders is of such a nature that some of the names have defeated enquirers, so that there are gaps. These, however, are now being filled, and it should be possible to shew a complete list of officers dating from 1618, for the first minute book, opened in 1619, records the name and the doings of the Bailiff for the previous year.

Every sort of trade and calling is mentioned amongst the avocations of the list of chief citizens of Hemel Hempstead. Malster, baker, yeoman, husbandman, grocer, innholder, draper, currier, brandy merchant, carpenter, blacksmith, silk throwster, perriwig

maker, surgeon, just plain "gent," bricklayer, brazier, butcher, straw hat factor, coal merchant, paper maker, schoolmaster, auctioneer, farmer, common brewer, ironmonger, chemist, surveyor, banker and attorney-at-law, the trades and professions are given as each Bailiff is chosen and takes the oath.

When we come to examine the list of Bailiffs we find many names as familiar as that first quoted, and some of outstanding interest or importance, while, again, others arrest the eye because of their quaintness. For instance, there was one, Michael Mouse, Bailiff in 1664, Francis Pitchfork, in 1682 and Philip Evilthrift, in 1876.

Of names familiar to the present generation we have, to choose a few examples, William Rolfe, of Piccotts End, in 1619, and more than one member of this well-known local family followed in the office. Zachariah Field was Bailiff in 1621, William Gladman in the following year, Robert Putnam, of High Street Side, in 1625, and a Stanbridge in 1628. John Cazo (or Cato) was the Chief Citizen of the vill in 1639, Thomas Throddon in 1640, followed by Willyam Dolt in 1643, by Francis Dell in 1644, and by John Bunn another well-known name in Hemel Hempstead, in 1649.

There is John Puddephatt, in 1676, and others of his name in succeeding years. Robert Halsey filled the seat of Bailiff in 1685, Henry Fletcher in 1687, and Matthew Glenister in 1698. We have Francis Chapman, in 1701, James Oliver in 1707, and Joseph Lee in 1744, all well-known names to-day in the neighbourhood of Hemel Hempstead. Finally, to give a few more instances, there is Harry Grover in 1798, William Ginger, the younger, who died during his year of office, in 1792, James Cato in 1799, Sir Astley Paston Cooper in 1825, Frederick Day in 1838, Thomas Woodman in 1848, Thomas Austin in 1857, Adam Joseph Chennells in 1879, Edward Montague Draper in 1884, and Lovel Smeathman, of Gade Spring, attorney-at-law, in 1890.

The name of Zachariah Field amongst the Bailiffs is worthy of some comment, for other men of the same name, and probably of the same family were elected at various times, and this Zachariah was probably related to Richard Field, born in Hemel Hempstead in 1561, educated at the grammar school at Berkhamsted, and author

of "The Book of the Church."

The name Thomas Deacon, of Corner Hall, catches the eye. He was Bailiff in 1637. Another Thomas Elisha Deacon, of Corner Hall, filled the office in 1823, and it will be remembered that within the Parish Church of St. Mary there is a memorial to one, Thomas Deacon, of Corner Hall, he of the long, spare body who—"departed Sept. 28th. AN DO 16 - -."

In 1660 Nicholas Stratford was Bailiff of the vill. Apart from the possibility that a recent Mayor and Bailiff and present Alderman of the Borough may be a descendant of the family the name Nicholas Stratford needs comment. Three years after the Nicholas above mentioned was elected to the Bailiwick, a Nicholas Stratford was born in Hemel Hempstead. He was consecrated fifty-six years later, and was one of the examiners required to prepare a scheme of revision of the Prayer Book. He was Bishop of Chester and one of the Governors of Queen's Anne's Bounty.

Lastly, one may mention Henry Fourdrinier, of Two Waters, Papermaker, Bailiff, in 1815. Miss H. F. T. Fourdrinier we are told, began the manufacture of paper at Frogmore Mill in 1804, and used for the first time a machine capable of producing continuous webs of paper. One may safely infer that the Bailiff was related to the lady and perhaps her partner. The family would appear to be of Hugenot origin, and France's loss was undoubtedly our gain. It is of more than passing interest to note that John Dickinson purchased Apsley Mill, adjacent to Frogmore Mill, in 1807, and patented a machine whereby fluid pulp was converted into a continuous sheet of paper. He too, was of Hugenot origin, and his purchase of the mill set on foot a local industry which has worldwide ramifications.

We have seen how the chief citizens of Hemel Hempstead followed one another through all the long years succeeding the gift of the first Charter. That each man was required to prove his staunchness will cause no surprise. In fact, no risks were taken either by the Crown or by the Church, as is seen by the following. Here is a sample of the oath which every Bailiff must take immediately following his inauguration. It is a verbatim copy of the oath signed by Sir Astley Paston Cooper in 1885.

"I, Clement Astley Paston Cooper, do solemnly and sincerely

in the presence of God profess, testify and declare upon the true faith of a Christian that I never will exercise any power, authority and influence that I may possess by virtue of the office of Bailiff for the vill of Hemel Hempstead, in the county of Hertford, to injure or weaken the Protestant Church, or the Bishops and Clergy of that same Church in the possession of any rights or privileges to which such Church or the said Bishops and Clergy are or might be by law entitled."

The oath appears comprehensive enough, but a further test was required. The Bailiff must attend the Parish Church and partake of Holy Sacrament in the presence of a witness. Every year the minute book gives us entries concerning this. There is a charge of 3s. 6d. for bread and wine, and tacked onto the 6s. 8d. charged by the attorney who has entered and certified the year's accounts is a charge for acting as witness of the taking of the Sacrament.

The Bailiff's duty to the Crown is explained hereunder :

" Expended at Hertford when I went to the Sessions to take the oath of Supremacie. 10s."

A similar sort of entry appears yearly, differing only in the amount spent, until, much later, the Bailiff journeyed to London to be sworn, instead of to Hertford. Apparently two horses for the journey to and from Hertford cost for hire the figure above mentioned.

We can complete an account of the duties of the earlier Bailiffs by returning to the subject of the Court of Pie Powder. It was essentially a court of summary jurisdiction, as already noted, set up to hear cases arising at the weekly market, and literally to settle them " while dust still remained on the feet of the offenders." No doubt many attending the market or fair were hawkers, or tramps, or mountebanks. Here is reference to one in 1700 : " Paid by a mountebank for a stall."

Only minor cases were dealt with by the Bailiff and his jury. Serious offenders were sent to trial at the sessions at Hertford, where itinerant magistrates attended. And, of course, there were justices of the peace in the surrounding country who could be called upon to deal locally with serious offences. The records of the Pie Powder Court contained in the minute books give not a single reference to prisoners or offences, though doubtless cases

were tried. The Court seems to have busied itself with the accounts of the Bailiff and with purely local affairs. Yet it was summoned and dismissed in the most formal manner. Imagine the scene outside the Court loft, in the presence of the Bailiff and his jury. The town crier is there, in all the glory of his official uniform, armed with bell and parchment.

“Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!” he cries.

“All persons that have anything to do at a Court of Pie Powder here to be holden at this time for the vill of Hemel Hempstead, in the County of Hertford, according to the Charter granted to the Bailiff and Inhabitants of the said vill, let them come in and they shall be heard.”

We can almost see the proud bearer of the bell, his chest puffed out to bursting point, leading the Bailiff and his jury up the stairs of the ancient market house and into the court room. We can hear his Oyez, thrice repeated, as he formally closed the proceedings at the behest of his masters, and perhaps—the numerous entries in the minute book rather lead to the suggestion—we might follow the city fathers of those early days up High Street and round the corner to “Widdow Hill’s” establishment, there to send up the total of the Bailiff’s accounts by quaffing the widow’s “bere.”

## *Chapter 9.*

### THE MARCH OF TIME.

Perusal of the minute books of the Bailiwick of Hemel Hempstead discloses a marked contrast as the years pass between the entries so faithfully set down by succeeding recorders. During some two centuries items of expenditure and of receipt are relatively few and unimportant, while the revenue of the Bailiwick was well below the £50 mark.

Examples of entries given here have been culled from a mass of papers, and generally speaking are remarkable more for their quaintness than for any important bearing they may have had upon the growing prosperity of the town. No item, in fact, was too small for entry, as if the recorder were hard put to fill his pages'.

"Paid to a man for thanks, 2d." That is another sample, quaint, no doubt, a neat method of describing a "tip," but having no other value.

Here are a few more.

"Spent upon the jury the next Thursday after, £1 10s. 0d."

And "Item, expended at Hertford when I went to the sessions to take the oath of supremacie, 10/-."

In 1700 the Bailiwick enjoyed the following income.

Toll stall on Fair day, 14/-

ditto 1/6.

From a mountebank for a stall, 14/6.

For the women's market, £1 4s. 0d.

Paid for entering my accounts, 6/8.

Butchers ; paid for stalls, £12 16s. 0d.

For stalls in the Market House, £2 14s. 0d.

For shops, £8 12s. 0d.

For a year's rent for a cobler's shop, 1/-.

But for all the lack of entries it becomes clear, reading through the lines of difficult writing, that the city fathers of those far off days were zealous in their duties, and watchful to increase the trade of the place.

For instance. 1655. "Whereas it is thought fitt an wooll markett to be made here maye be beneficiall to the town and country, it is ordered that the place where the barley markett is shall be the place for the sale thereof, and the court lofte a place appoynted for laying upp of the said wooll bought or not sould. And that the first markett daye to begin on Thursdaye next after Midsummer daye and so continue every Thursdaye until Michaelmas."

And they were equally careful that no inhabitant should infringe the rights of the citizens. Francis Chapman was the Bailiffe in 1701 when an encroachment of the highway was reported. "The Bailiff and Jury." we read, "did view a sty at the dore of Walter Oxton which is an innroashment upon the highway or street of Hemel Hempstead, and likewise another sty at the dore of the house lately built by Zachariah ffield, which sty is also an irroashment upon the said streeete." Each delinquent was ordered "to pay the said Bailiffe one farthing as an acknowledgement of the said innroashment and each a farthing a year to the succeeding Bailiffe."

Long years afterwards there arose the desirability of lighting the town, when the Bailiff and his jury expended £6 7s. 10d. in the purchase of lamps, and £2 19s. 8d. for a barrel of oil. Lamps required a lamplighter, and we get information that Robert Bigg was appointed, and later on, dressed in an official coat which cost 7/-. He also functioned as "bellman," for it appears that strict rules had to be drawn up for the regulation of the market. People were apt to steal a march on one another by exposing their goods at a very early hour, and so securing the bulk of the sales. Hence rules which forbad the opening of the market before eight o'clock during the summer months, and then only at the sound of the official bell. It is as a matter of fact, a custom which obtained and still obtains, elsewhere and is repeated in many markets in Europe. Robert Bigg, like his forerunners and those who followed as "Bellman" seems to have been a general factotum, and to have picked up a quite satisfactory living by performing a host of various jobs. Bellman, lamp lighter, summoner of the jury, for which he received 1/- a time, attendant on the Bailiff at the annual fair, when he received not only cash, "but food and bere." After debate

his work of lighting Hemel Hempstead was recognised in the following way. "Salary yearly of 20/- for looking after and lighting the said lamps."

Some time later the payment was increased to 25/-, and there it stood for many years, though, as the town's prosperity rose the cost of the official coat advanced to over a guinea.

From items such as the following "Gave the soldiers when war was proclaimed against France, £3 3s. 0d," and "Gave the ringers when Cape Breton was taken, 5/-" we learn that the Bailiff and his men were in touch with outside affairs in the years 1774 and 1776, and that, in respect to domestic matters they were ever watchful. They put out an orphan boy as an apprentice. To what trade and master is not stated, but the boy was John Bovingdon—a waif from that hamlet one supposes—and the cost was £4 2s. 6d. William Dell was the Cryer round about that time, and we can see him perambulating the High Street, Bury Road and Saffron Hill, now christened Queen Street, even as far as Cherry Bounce, so recently, alas ! rechristened Cross Street, calling upon the inhabitants to attend upon the Bailiff and his jury as a special meeting was to be held regarding the removal of the fire engine house. It was 1787, and William Ginger, of Bury House, desired to move the engine shed from the lower end of Hemel Hempstead to a point "between Bury Yard and the blacksmith's shop."

Even then city fathers were careful of the rights of the inhabitants. Mr. Ginger might remove the engine house and build it "at his own costs" and on his own land provided only that he signed an undertaking to convey house and land to the Bailiwick on demand.

Reverting to the re-christening of that quite-recently insalbrious street called Cherry Bounce, now happily cleared of its delapidated houses, one ventures to question the wisdom of the Borough Authority which has banished a place-name of unique rareness —there is probably no other Cherry Bounce in the whole of England—and has substituted for it the name of a former citizen, eminent no doubt, but merely a name to this generation.

From trivial items such as "paid mending the town drum, 3/-" we come to mention of a resolution that any jurymen correctly summoned, and at home, who does not attend on the Bailiff shall

be fined 2/6. More rules are set up to govern the market, together with fines to be levied for a breach of those rules. For instance, the straw platt market was moved to Colletts Yard "next to Thomas Saunders." Those who attempted to sell a pound of butter under weight were to be fined 2/-. A "swine" found at large was to be impounded, and the owner fined 3/6. A person daring to sell bad fish was to be mulcted in a fine of 20/-, and for selling bad flesh, considered a greater enormity, the fine was 40/-. All these fines were to go to the Bailiwick.

That the affairs of the ancient market house were carefully watched is made clear by these entries. "1793 Spent when the meat was burned, 3/5," and "Paid for faggots to burn the same, 2/-."

There is no discoverable information as to when the market house was built. That it covered the site now occupied by the present Town Hall is clear, and its general appearance can be gathered from illustrations hanging in the present Council Chamber. It was a long, thatched erection, perched on wooden pillars, so that it was open underneath, and there the stalls of butchers, bakers and candlestick makers were accommodated on the Thursday market. At some later period the ground floor was enclosed and many of the stalls accommodated in the open, while, later still, a portion of the church yard was added to the market space, and towards the end of the nineteenth century the whole place was demolished and the present building erected and added to from time to time. It is worth remarking that the present council chamber was then the corn store, and a specially strong floor was built in. So large was the volume of corn delivered that a hydraulic lift was installed.

But the corn market has left Hemel Hempstead. We can advance the history by stating that corn was presently sold by means of samples, and not brought in bulk. Then, doubtless due to changing conditions brought about by the wholesale importation of cereals, the corn market declined, sank into insignificance and expired. It had brought great prosperity. In the early days flour from the water-worked mills on Bulbourne and Gade had gone weekly to London. So large was the supply, and so dependent was the great city upon it that when great frosts came and roads

(By Courtesy of Hemel Hempstead Corporation).

Ancient Market House and Butchers' Stalls.





and rivers were unusable there was almost a famine in London, for the bakers there carried only a small reserve of flour.

A final quotation from amongst all the many hundreds of entries relating more or less to the town's affairs, should not be omitted. Mad dogs were a terrible danger and trouble to the Bailiff and inhabitants, so that very early in the nineteenth century we find a Public Meeting called, no doubt with the help of the Cryer and his bell. Thereat it was resolved that all dogs be tied or shut up "so as to prevent their going at large for the space of two calendar months from this day. Penalty 5/- per dog per day." That statement seems to indicate that, even if infective bacteria were undreamt of in those days, the disease of hydrophobia was known to have a long incubation period.

Turning from canine ailments we can learn in other town records how the overseers and constables dealt with cases of smallpox and plague. Hemel Hempstead was within such relatively easy touch of London that great infections there were almost sure to spread to outlying hamlets. Each of them had a "pest house." That at Hemel Hempstead appears to have been at the end of Wood Lane. At Chipperfield, to quote an instance, the name "pest house lane" sufficiently indicates its location there.

Contrary to expectation, plague cases were not sent to the pest house. They were segregated in their own homes, and with them all "contacts," and those who died, and the majority did, were hastily interred in the back yard.

It will be remembered how the "black death" in 1348 had so decimated the yeomen and husbandmen of the manor that a special sitting of the manorial court had need to summon all surviving witnesses to assess the manorial boundary. This horrid infection revisited the peaceful vill of Hemel Hempstead in 1593. The parish register, which was first opened in 1558 gives us the following:—

"Susan, daughter of John Dell, carpenter, of ye plague. December 9th." Three more of this citizen's children fell victims. In August, 1594, the pestilence returned to the neighbourhood, and by the end of September had claimed almost thirty victims, and still more in October. The house of "Henrie Smithe, clerk" was smitten, and as a consequence entries in the register were not

made at the time, but added later, as is shewn by this pathetic note, "here some (names) be wanting yet dyed in plague time. See last page." "Richard the son of Richard How was buried the 10th day of October, 1594, which was left out of this booke in the extremities of the sickness, when the parish clerke was shutt up it being suspected that his wife died of the plague, a few days before the death of the said Richard How as appeareth by this booke."

Here is the authority for shutting people into their houses when plague was suspected. It relates to the before-mentioned Henry Smith, clerk. "Whereas we are credibly informed that the plague is in the house of Henrie Smithe of your parish, whereof one dyed, and whereas also we are informed that divers of the inhabitants of your said parish have resorted to the said house, both before and after the said party was dead—. These are therefore—that forthwith you cause the said house so infected to be shut up, and that you appoint a warder at the door to keep them from coming forth and others from coming at them, and that you the church-wardens and overseers of the poor be careful that the parties shut up be sufficiently provided for their present relief and sustentation—etc."

In 1625 plague again visited Hemel Hempstead, and an entry records that "August 23rd. Edward Barker, Elizabeth his wife and Ellen his daughter were buried on their owne backside at Two Waters dyeinge of the plague in the tyme of the great contagion at London."

That "great contagion" is said to have claimed as many as 35,000 victims in the great city. But when it returned in 1665-6 there was a far greater holocaust, though, strangely enough, Hemel Hempstead seems to have escaped.

It is scarcely probable that any vill in the country of comparable size with Hemel Hempstead has been more thoughtful for the care of its sick and needy. The pest house for smallpox cases, and the moneys paid by old-time overseers of the poor for the attendance of a doctor at the homes of the sick and injured came in time to be supplemented by a poor law institute, otherwise a "workhouse," though that term has happily now been dropped. To it was attached an infirmary. We have seen vast improvements there of late,

and indeed, the care of sick and needy throughout the land has taken on a new and vastly better form under the care of Public Assistance Committees. But we are conscious that Hemel Hempstead did far more. The forethought and munificence of Sir Astley Paston Cooper provided the first "Voluntary" hospital—infirmary it was dubbed then—at Piccotts End, in the year 1826. Sir John Sebright, as the demand for beds and better accommodation grew, most generously gave Chere House and continued for years to support it with lavish hand, and in 1877 the present West Herts Hospital was opened. It has advanced with the times, and has—as it of necessity must do to take care of an increasing population—increased in size at an astonishing rate. It may be said, in fact, that this hospital offers the most up-to-date accommodation and treatment.

## *Chapter 10.*

### CANAL AND RAILWAY AND BOXMOOR TRUST.

More and more important undertakings of a varied nature claimed the attention and the energies of Hemel Hempstead's leading men as the years rolled on, and the march of progress unhampered by local dictators or by religious differences permitted men to apply their minds to other problems.

It must be apparent from the sketch of life's history in the ancient vill that, from the days of the Conqueror at least, the great and the rich in the land, in Hertfordshire as elsewhere, were relatively few, being confined almost exclusively to Barons and their immediate satellites, and to Abbots and church dignitaries. The humble villein, the freeholder, even the copyholder had need to satisfy the wants of these people almost before he snatched his own relatively poor livelihood. But increasing freedom was being won all the time. Yeomen were becoming prosperous and serfs were being freed. We see how the suppression of the religious houses brought in time new owners to the manors, and how a bailiff chosen by the inhabitants of the vill was now in a position to conduct public affairs for the benefit of the inhabitants at large rather than for the well-being of a favoured few.

That emancipation brought with it a freedom of thought hardly experienced before. The Sessions Rolls at Hertford give us many examples of culprits haled before the justices in the seventeenth century because they had failed to attend church. Then, with the passage of years, as nonconformity won recruits and power, there is an end of such cases, and, to cite an instance, a house is licensed so that Quakers may attend it.

It is not surprising to discover a spirit of enterprise urging the Bailiff and his jury on to greater things. Their revenue was increasing with astonishing rapidity. From the paltry £25 or less, received per annum in the very early days it was now vastly swollen by rents received for shops and stalls. And the corn, wool and straw-platt trades were bringing prosperity to the people.

In between the many celebrations therefore, we find the first effort to provide gas lighting for the town, and in 1835 the affair developed into the formation of a company. In 1856 the under portion of the market house was enclosed at a cost of £317 11s. 6d., which was subscribed by the corn merchants, while the butchers were ejected.

In 1861 came the decision to appeal to the Midland Railway to build a railway from Boxmoor to Bury Mill End and so to Harpenden. Mention of this demand brings to the fore the question of both rail and canal communication, and with the latter the subject of Boxmoor and adjacent common lands, and the Trust whereby it had been governed. Dealing, however, with the railway question first of all, though its coming followed, and did not anticipate the canal, it appears that it was not so much opposition of the inhabitants of Hemel Hempstead which diverted the London and Birmingham Railway Company from their original purpose to take a line of easy ascent and run their rails by way of the Gade gap over the Chilterns. Rather it was objections raised by landholders. Whatever the reason, Hemel Hempstead had felt the want of easy and swift communication with London and other parts, that is, swift compared with former methods of transport. The Bailiff and his Jury had petitioned the canal company to send a branch of their waterway into Hemel Hempstead, but without success, and now they petitioned for a railway to Harpenden, whence they could get their goods to London. Eventually—that is to say—in 1877—a line had been constructed from Hemel Hempstead to Luton, and the minute book of the Bailiwick gives an animated description of its formal opening, of the journey of the Bailiff and his Committee, and their special band of musicians to Luton, of festivities and champagne there, and of a triumphal return to Hemel Hempstead, where, with the band and functionaries of the vill leading, they marched to the New Town Hall, where they sat down to an excellent champagne luncheon, provided by mine host of the Kings Arms, to wit, Mr. Watkins. Some time later, as railway facilities were still insufficient, this particular railway was extended to Boxmoor and to Harpenden.

The history of Boxmoor and its Trustees goes back to the sixteenth century, to 1574 in fact. With the suppression of the

Bonshommes at Ashridge, a new owner, namely the Crown, had come into possession of the Manor of Hemel Hempstead, which, of course, included its outlying sub-manors. From Henry VIII it passed in quick succession to Edward VI, Mary and so to Elizabeth, and from that august queen it went by gift to the favourite, Leicester. That is to say, the manor lands were acquired by him with the exception of those parts already leased to the Combe family, the exact extent of which seems doubtful. What is certain, however, is that their leases excluded the mills other than Bury Mill, and probable the advowson of the church of St. Mary.

Robert, Earl of Leicester, parted with his Hemel Hempstead property in 1574, the purchasers being Francis, Earl of Bedford, and Peter Graye, of that county, whose son, Richard, appears to have secured the Earl's portion after his father's death. In 1651 this new proprietor of the manor lands sold a portion, for the sum of £75, to John Rolfe, yeoman, Richard Pope, shoemaker and William Gladman, yeoman, inhabitants of the manor of Hemel Hempstead. Francis Combe witnessed the deed which was to be of such importance to the people of Hemel Hempstead.

This portion of land contained some 190 acres, and roughly followed a boundary which fringed the northern bank of the Bulbourne where it took its original course, before being diverted by the canal, swung north to the back of the Star Cottages, recently demolished, which were erected in the first place, and many years ago by "squatters," who, finding the land unfenced, took possession without asking anyone's permission. The line then touched St. John's Road, and ran in front of what is now the Heath Park Hotel, but was, in those early days the southern boundary of the sub-manor of Haybarns, or Heath Barns. Turning north it reached the site of "The Plough," at Moor End. Thence the boundary turned south till it met the point where the river Gade joins the Bulbourne, and so beside the two rivers conjoined to "The Bell" at Two Waters. Thence taking a westerly course it skirted beside or rather, on the main London Road to Moor End Farm, at the northern edge of Bovingdon, where in the neighbourhood of the railway bridge it connected with its starting point.

Boxmoor in the days of Queen Bess, and long before her time, would appear to have been common land, on which the villeins,

freeholders and copyholders adjacent to it had rights of grazing. It went by various names, for instance, Haywarde, Haybourne, Castle Meade and Baylie Meade. The two latter names suggest the presence of a castle, and it seems possible, even probable that a castle once existed at a point some few hundred yards north of the gas works, adjacent to the junction of the two rivers. Berk-hampstead had its baronial castle, and it is likely enough that there was another, in a strategic position, where a garrison could watch the roads leading north-west and north respectively, by way of the Chiltern gaps to Tring and Leighton Buzzard, and, of course, the roads to Kings Langley and so to London.

A secret Trust was drafted by the generous benefactors who desired the well-being of Hemel Hempstead for all time. The conveyance of the land states that it was to be "a secret trust to them committed to and for the benefit and onlie use whereby the inhabitants of Hemel Hempstead aforesaid, and of Bovingdon their heirs and assigns might and should for ever hereafter have hould and enjoy the said meadow."

The Grand Junction Canal Company was incorporated by Act of Parliament in 1793, and took some twenty five acres of the moor, declining at the same time to make a cut up into the town of Hemel Hempstead. Unlike the railway, which was built some forty years later, the coming of the canal was a matter of rejoicing, though there was disappointment that it was not to come right up into the ancient vill, where it would have been of great service to the corn merchants.

For various reasons, and partly because the old trust deed governing Boxmoor was unwieldly and unworkable, Parliament passed, in June, 1809, a new Act governing the administration of the trust. This confirmed the sale of the land to the Canal Company, and at the same time, the sale to the Foudriniers of Two Waters Mill. The trust was to be administered in future by twelve trustees, and certain conditions were laid down governing pasture, enclosure, etc. The terms permitted the sale in 1829 of a plot of land for the building of St. John's Church, and in 1830 a lease was secured of Rowdon, Dewgreen and Shothanger commons which were held by the Dean and Chapter of St. Pauls. In 1835, the trustees sold, with con-

siderable reluctance, and only because of the statutory powers held by the London and Birmingham Railway Company, some eleven acres of the moor, and promptly expended a portion of the £992 they received in the purchase of rather more than six acres of Haybarns Meadow, extending northward beside Cotterells Road.

It will be admitted that the Borough of Hemel Hempstead and all its numerous inhabitants have good reason to be proud of those three men who, so long ago, showed such thought for the amenties of those who were to follow.

This brief history of the ancient Saxon vill does not end with the granting of its latest charter on July 13th 1898, for the citizens who have since then filled the conjoined post of Mayor and Bailiff, together with their Corporation of Aldermen and Councillors, their Town Clerk, permanent officials and Mace Bearer, have advanced the fortunes of the Borough out of all recognition. But that is a tale almost of to-day, and may be more easily unravelled than can the doings of hundreds of years ago. No doubt Hemel Hempstead will continue to develop, and let us hope that, in the process, it will be mindful of a past history not altogether without interest and glory.

# Hemel Hempstead Charters

## King Henry VIII Charter.

Grant by Henry VIII to Hemel Hempstead incorporating the Town DOCUMENT IN THE POSSESSION OF THE HEMEL HEMPSTEAD BOROUGH COUNCIL.

(Translation).

(29 December, 31 Henry VIII (A.D. 1539).

HENRY VIII.

Henry the eighth by the Grace of God King of England and France, Defender of the Faith Lord of Ireland and on earth the supreme head of the English Church to his archbishops bishops dukes earls barons knights justices sheriffs reeves ministers and all other bailiffs and faithful people Greeting Know that we of our special grace and our certain knowledge and mere motion have granted and by the presents do grant for us and our heirs as much as in us lies to our beloved men and inhabitants within the vill of Hemelhamsted in our county of Hertford that that vill shall be a vill incorporate of a Bailiff and Inhabitants within the vill aforesaid for ever and that the Bailiff and Inhabitants within the same vill shall be and ought to be one body incorporate and one perpetual commonalty in thing and in name and fit and capable in law and shall have perpetual succession and that one person successively of the inhabitants within the vill aforesaid every year shall be elected by those inhabitants as Bailiff of the vill aforesaid for the governing of the same vill for one whole year and we by the tenor of the presents nominate and appoint and ordain William Stephyns one of the inhabitants within the vill aforesaid for this year namely until the feast of Saint Andrew the Apostle next to come and that the same Bailiff and Inhabitants by the name of the Bailiff and inhabitants within the vill of Hemelhamsted shall be able to plead and be impleaded in all our courts and other places whatsoever and shall have a common seal for doing and carrying on the business of the vill aforesaid. And further of our more abundant grace we

have granted and given licence and by the presents do grant and give licence for us and our heirs aforesaid that the same Bailiff and Inhabitants and their successors for ever shall have hold and can hold and have one market every week at our vill of Hemelhamsted aforesaid to be held on any Thursday throughout the year and one fair there to be held every year lasting through one day namely on the feast of Corpus Christi with the Courts of Piepowder there to be held during the same market and fair together with the issues profits and amerciaments arising from such market fair and Courts and with all liberties free customs profits and emoluments pertaining or belonging to such market and fair provided that that market and fair shall not be to the hurt of neighbouring markets and fairs. Wherefore we will and firmly command for us and our heirs aforesaid that the same Bailiffs and Inhabitants within the vill of Hemelhamsted for ever shall have and hold and can have and hold the aforesaid market and fair at our said vill of Hemelhamsted to be held in form aforesaid with the said Courts of Piepowder together with all the issues profits and amerciaments from such market fair and courts and with all the liberties and free customs profits and emoluments pertaining or belonging to such market and fair provided that that market and fair shall not be to the hurt of neighbouring markets and neighbouring fairs as is aforesaid for ever. These being witnesses The illustrious man Sir Thomas Audeley knight Lord Audeley of Weldon our Chancellor and our most dear kinsmen Thomas of Norfolk Treasurer of England and Charles of Suffolk chief Master of our Household Dukes, John of Oxford our Chamberlain of England and William of Southampton our High Admiral of England Earls, Sir Thomas Crumwell knight Lord Crumwell, keeper of our privy seal and William Sandes Lord Sandes Chamberlain of our Household barons and Sir Thomas Cheyney Knight, treasurer of our Household and Sir William Kyngeston knight controller of our Household and others. Given by our hand at Westmins̄ter on the twenty-ninth day of December in the thirty-firs̄t year of our reign by the King himself and of the date aforesaid by the authority of Parliament.

Hales.











